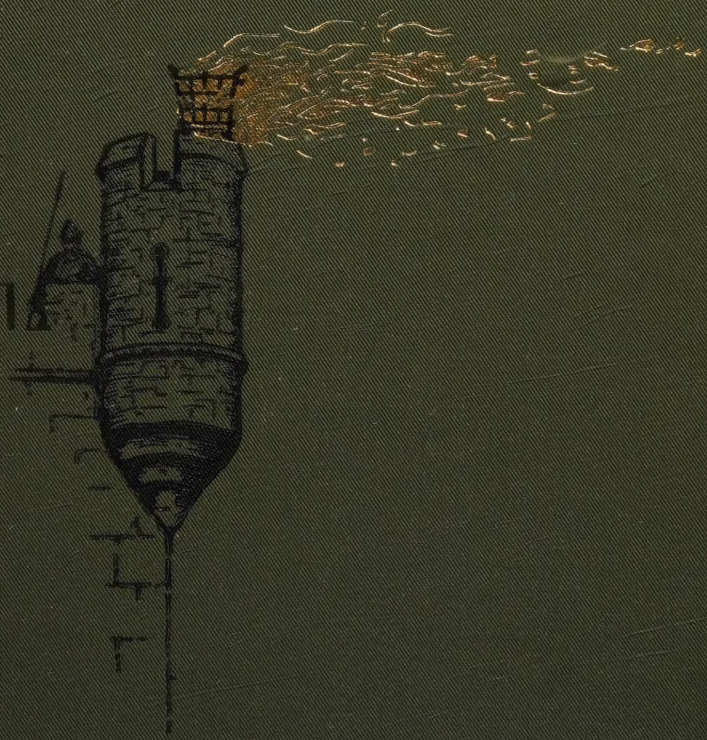
History and Poetry of the Scottish Border



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HISTORY AND POETRY OF THE SCOTTISH BORDER

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THE

HISTORY AND POETRY OF THE SCOTTISH BORDER

THEIR MAIN FEATURES AND RELATIONS

BY

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BORDER HISTORY AND POETRY.

CHAPTER I.

MEDIÆVAL PERIOD—FEATURES OF BORDER LIFE AND CHARACTER.

THE families introduced into the valleys of the Tweed and its tributaries by David I. and his immediate successors have now nearly all disappeared from the district. With a few exceptions, even their names have passed away from the hills and glens over which they once ruled, or they are borne by landless representatives. But their abandoned towers or dwelling-places still form one of the most characteristic and suggestive features of the scenery of Tweedside. The ruined Border Peel meets you on many a knowe. But, as a rule, not much of it remains. In many cases the tower itself, with the quaint human life carried on within it—the comfort there was, the terror and alarm, the hopes and fears, the courage to face danger,—all have equally passed away; and seldom

now have we aught but the solitary ash, whose roots are enwoven beneath the green mound, where hall was bright and hearthstone gleamed. The names of the ancient possessors are mere dim memories; even their very graves are forgotten. They have undergone almost the last stage of human oblivion.

Curiously enough the Border Keep bears the same name, *peel* or *pile*, as the Cymri gave to their hill-dwellings (*pill*, moated or fossed fort).[1] The circular fort of the older race is found generally near the comparatively modern keep, but higher up on the hill. These old mounded dwellings are arranged as carefully in sight of each other as are the mediæval towers; and some of the larger of them, such as that on the East or White Meldon, near the junction of the Lyne with the Tweed, commands the view of upwards of twenty ring-forts and the lines of nearly as many valleys. But it certainly is curious, as showing the continuity of historical feeling, and the power of the past, that the race which actually displaced these old Cymri, settled on the hills, almost on the very spots where they had lived, and borrowed from them the name of their dwellings.

It would be difficult to fix the exact date of the erection of any existing building or ruin in the shape of a Border castle. The strengths of the Borders were so frequently destroyed and rebuilt in the reigns of the early Stewarts, that we must regard what remains of them rather as representing to some extent the more ancient

[1] *Pill* in British and Cornish, as well as in the language of ancient Gaul, signifies a fossed and mounded stronghold or fortress. It is unknown in Gaelic, but has been borrowed by the Teutonic.

form of structure, than as the actual buildings of the time of Robert Bruce and his son. This holds true even where we have record of a special licence for the building. In the eleventh Parliament of James III., 2d April 1481, there is an order for the repair and furnishing of castles and strengths near the Border and upon the sea-coast.[1] We find two of the king's castles named—viz., Dunbar and Lochmaben; and the owners of St Andrews, Aberdeen, Temptallon (Tantallon), Hume, Dowglas, Hailes Adringtowne, "and specially the Hermitage, that is in maist danger," are commanded to keep and defend them. Each lord is called upon "to stuffe his awin house, and strength them with victualles, men and artailzierie, and to reparrell them quhair it misters."[2] Long before this period, the land was obviously well covered with castles and castellated houses. They were, in fact, the characteristic features of the old Scottish landscape. Alexander Hume of Polwarth, in his picture of a Scottish summer day —one of the first poems in the language that dared to be literally true to the Scottish landscape—says very characteristically :—

"The rayons of the sunne we see
Diminish in their strenth;
The schad of everie towre and tree,
Extended is in lenth.
Great is the calm for everie quhair,
The wind is settin downe;
The reik thrawes right up in the air,
From everie towre and towne."[3]

And this was written as late as the time of James VI.

We can trace the remains of the mediæval peels in the

[1] C. 82. [2] Is needed. [3] *Thanks for a Summer Day.*

shape of mouldering wall, or ivied gable, or simply green mounds, up the Tweed from Berwick to the Bield. They can be followed, further, up nearly all the side-valleys—up the glens of the waters and the hopes of the burns. The marks of hill-road and bridle-track will even now conduct the experienced mountaineer from ruin to ruin, and he will be astonished at the directness of the routes which the old dwellers in those remote towers knew and used. Very few of these old towers are now entire. Yet we can picture one of them well enough. The external appearance was that of a solid square mass of masonry—generally the greywacke of the district perforated with holes or *boles*, which admitted air and light, and also served for defence. This was usually perched on a knoll or eminence—perhaps the top of a scarped rock with a craggy face; the Tweed itself, or one of its tributary waters or burns, flowed near; some birches and hazels, an ash or an elm, dotted the knoll; and on the green braes a few sheep or cattle quietly pastured.

The tower was seldom of more than three storeys. The lowest, or apartment on the ground-floor, was almost universally vaulted; and this was frequently the case with the storey immediately above, forming the hall or dining-room. The ground-floor apartment was probably the store-house for the Martinmas mart and winter provisions generally. It might in some cases have been a refuge for the cattle about the tower in times of danger. Occasionally there were two vaulted chambers on the ground-floor, divided by a thick wall, as in the case of the ancient Castlehill of Manor. The second and third storeys accommodated the family, with what comfort

or decency it would be sometimes painful to imagine. There was usually a narrow spiral stair leading to the top, on which there were projecting battlements—often machicoules—and in the centre of the space there, a kind of crow-gabled cottage, which served both as kitchen and watch-tower. Here also on the top or roof storey of the peel was the *bartisan*, the passage round and behind the battlements, which served as a place of outlook, and also as the withdrawing-room for the ladies of the household on a quiet summer afternoon or evening. On the edge of the upper wall or roof, or attached sometimes to the chimney, hung an iron cone sunk in an iron grating,—"the fire-pan," filled with fuel, peat and pine-root, ready to be lit at the moment of alarm. The tower had generally two doors—an inside wooden one, studded with iron nails, and an outside iron gate. The moss-troopers placed in pledge in the Vale of Jed Water were familiar with the significance of entry within "the irne yetts of Ferniehurst." There was usually a courtyard in front of the tower, surrounded by a wall called the *barmkyn*, the access to which was through a strong iron gate or studded oaken or ashen door. According to the Act of Parliament, 12th June 1535, the wall of the barmkyn was to be one ell thick, roughly, thirty-seven inches, and six ells in height, that is, over eighteen feet. The space enclosed was sixty feet. Within this the cattle could be driven at night, or in case of a surprise. Every proprietor of a hundred pound land of old extent was to build a barmkyn for the defence of his tenants and their goods, and, if he thought it desirable, he might build a tower for himself within the enclosure. Inside and around the courtyard

enclosed by the barmkyn were the huts or dwellings of the immediate retainers of the family.

The accommodation for a family in these solid pieces of masonry was no doubt limited enough. It must, however, be borne in mind that in the cases of the more considerable families, there was frequently, besides the tower or peel, an ordinary place of residence of a more commodious character. The peel was in these instances reserved as a place of refuge in times of attack and danger, especially for the females and children of the family. Thus Carey, in his *Memoirs*, referring to his actings as deputy under Lord Scroope, while English Warden of the Marches, tells us that a Græme, living within five miles of Carlisle, whom he had occasion to attack, "had a pretty house, and close to it a strong tower for his own defence in time of need." When Carey approached the place, and before he could surround the house, "the two Scots [the brother Græmes] were gotten in the strong tower."[1] They were, however, ultimately obliged to open the iron gate of the tower and surrender themselves as prisoners to the deputy.

One of the best surviving examples of what must be regarded as at least latterly only a peel of refuge is that of Barns, on the Tweed, about three miles above the town of Peebles. It was probably at one time the residence of the family, but after its possessors, the Burnets, had migrated to a larger house, that stood to the west of it, and is now pulled down, this quaint old keep, with a date of 1498, was preserved as a place of resort in times of alarm and danger.

[1] Quoted in Note 48, *Lay of the Last Minstrel.*

Then several of the more considerable families, who lived in summer in the ancestral tower, had mansion-houses in the neighbouring town, to which they emigrated in winter. Thus, in Peebles, there was the town residence of the Hays of Neidpath, Earls of Tweeddale, and of their successors, the Earls of March—viz., the Dean's House in the High Street, now the Chambers Institution. The ancient lairds of Dawyck had also, up to the Union of the Crowns, and even later, a residence in Peebles, known latterly as "The Pillars," and situated to the north-east of the site of the town cross. Even the Dickiesouns of Winkston and Smithfield, small and poor lairds, and always lawless and aggressive, had, strange to say, a town house in the Cowgate of Edinburgh. It was a quaint and curiously ornate structure, but, alas! I am afraid it has gone down within these few recent years under the spirit of modern improvement, which means generally the vulgar Philistine intelligence, and is often very far from carrying with it unmitigated blessings.

The internal fittings of these towers were, no doubt, rude enough. The upper or convex part of the vaulted roof of each storey was usually covered with a wooden floor, and, as a precursor of the modern carpet, the boards were generally strewn with the bent-grass of the moors, or the rushes of the haughs. With these were intermingled sweet-smelling herbs, such as thyme, bed-straw (*galium*), or fresh-odoured heather. The fragrance of the hillside would thus at least for a time be felt in the narrow and ill-lighted rooms. Glass was rare and costly, and the narrow boles that served for windows were either left wholly open, or they were fitted with a board

that served as a shutter. Well on in the time of the Stewarts, "glessin-work"—*opus vitreum*—was found only in the houses of the wealthy.[1] Gawain Douglas, in his famous Prologue on Winter, prefixed to the seventh book of the *Æneid*, speaking of his getting up in the raw winter morning, tells us that he

> "Bad beit the fyire,[2] and the candill alycht,
> Syne blissit me, and, in my weydis dycht,
> *Ane schot wyndo*[3] *unschet*[4] *a lytill on char*,[5]
> Persaivit the mornyng bla, wan and har."[6]

This window was evidently without glass, and common at the time.

The significant feature of the picture, when these peels were the important points of the district, is that iron cone sunk in the iron grating, which holds the *bale*[7] or *need-fire*.[8] It could tell its tale by night or by day—by ruddy glare or by dark cloud of smoke. This was the form of the bale-fire usually attached to the tower or castle. On some of the towers there was a beacon-turret of stone, into which "the fire-pan" was placed. There are remains of those picturesque lantern structures on the

[1] On this point there are some curious entries in the *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland* (see Preface, p. ccii.)

[2] *Beit* is to add, supplement; here, to add fuel, replenish.

[3] A projecting window. [4] Opened. [5] Ajar.

[6] *Works* by Small, iii. 78.

[7] Originally flame or blaze, then signal-fire; A.S. *bael*—funeral pile; more likely Icel. *baal*, strong fire.

[8] Need-fire is said to be originally fire produced by the friction of two pieces of wood; afterwards beacon-fire. Its origin is given as A.S. *nyd*, force, and *fyr*, fire. Beacon-fire was *fyrwit* with the Anglo-Saxons—that is, fire-message or messenger; so with the Swedes *eldbute*, signifying the same.

towers of Holehouse or Hollows, Elshieshields, Hoddam, and Repentance.[1] There seems to be the broken part of one on the western—perhaps older—tower of Neidpath. What may be regarded as the other form of the beacon has been described as that of "a long and strong tree set up, with a long iron pole across the head of it, and an iron brander fixed on a stalk in the middle of it, for holding a tar-barrel."[2] This form would doubtless be that generally used on a hill or eminence.

The regulation of the bale-fire forms the subject of an Act of Parliament of James II., 13th October 1455. It is both curious and minute: "It is seene speedefull that there be coist made at the East passage, betwixt Roxburgh and Berwick. And that it be walked at certain fuirds, the quhilkis gif mister[3] be, sal make taikenings[4] be bailes burning and fire. In the first, a bail to be made at Hume, be the walkers at that fuird, quhair it may be seene at Hume. And als that the samin persones may come to Hume in proper person, and their bailes to be made in this maner. Ane Baile, is warninge of their cumminge, quhat power that ever they bee of: twa bailes togidder at anis, they are cumming in deed: four bailes, ilk ane beside uther, and al at anis as four candelles, suithfast knawledge that they are of great power and meanis far, as to Hadingtoun, Dunbar, Dalkeith, or thereby. The samin taikenings to be watched and maid at Eggerhope Castell,[5] fra they se

[1] See Armstrong's *Liddesdale*, i. 77, and *Castellated Architecture of Scotland*, iii. 217.

[2] Stevenson, quoted by Scott, notes to the *Lay*, 47.

[3] Need.

[4] Signals, tokenings.

[5] Probably on Eggerhope (Edgarhope) Law, nearly opposite Lauder, on the east side of the Leader.

the fire of Hume, that they fire richt-swa. And in like maner, on Sowtra Edge sal see the fire of Eggerhope Castell, and mak takening in like maner. And then may all Lowthiane be warned, and in speciall the Castell of Edinburgh, and their four fyres to be maid in like maner, that they in Fife and fra Striviling east, and the east parte of Lowthiane, and to Dunbar all may see them, and cum to the defense of the Realme. And they will not be sleuthful them selve, for to be warned of their fyres, they sal wit of their cumming ouer Tweede, and then considering that their far passage, we sal, God-willing, be als soone reddie as they, and al people be west Edinburgh to draw to Edinburgh, and fra Edinburgh east to Haddingtoun. And all Merchandes of Burrowes to pursue the East quarter, quhair it passis, and at Dumpender Law and North Berwick Law Bailes to be burnt in forme before written, for warning of the sea-coast."[1]

The keeper or chamberlain of Howdam was enjoined "that he assuredly take heed that the watch-house of Trailtrow be keeped be the watch thereof: And in the time of warfare, the Beaken, as is devised, that is ever in weir and peace, the watch to be keeped on the house head; and in the Weir the beaken in the fire-pan be keeped, and never faill burning, so lang as the Englishmen remain in Scotland; and with ane bell to be on the head of the Fire-pan, which shall ring whenever the fray is, or that the watchman seeing the thieves disobedient come over the Water of Annand, or thereabout, and knows them to be enemies; and whoever bides fra the fray or turns again so long as the beaken burns, or the bell rings,

[1] *Acts of the Scots Parliament*, Iac. II., 48.

shall be holden as partakers to the enemies, and used as traitors to the head-burgh of the shire." [1]

No signal ever stirred the breast more deeply, or told its story more clearly and picturesquely, than that glaring bale-fire. It did its work with incredible rapidity—a rapidity quite telegraphic. Each tower was so situated as to catch the warning from its neighbour, at a distance frequently of only two or three miles. When of an evening at the Fireburn, near Coldstream, the bale

> "Waved like a blood-flag on the sky,
> All flaring and uneven,"

the answering flame would rise and be seen so speedily all up Teviotdale, up Ettrick and Yarrow, and up Tweeddale to its furthest wilds, that by the early morning ten thousand armed men have been known to meet together at a single place of rendezvous; for the hill-roads were direct and expeditious, and the Borderer on his hardy pony knew them as well beneath the grey cloud of night as in

> "The lee licht of the moon."

It was the flame of the beacon-fire along those valleys and streams, so often lit, which fused the people into a common body, kept them true to their allegiance to the Scottish king and the Scottish nationality. Hate and resistance to the Southerner, the common interest of self-defence, banded them into a unity among themselves, and kept them from breaking off from the king who reigned over them, but really only ruled in Fife and the Lothians. He was to them a rallying centre against a common and

[1] Nicolson, *Border Laws*, 198.

powerful foe, and little more than this. The "Hammer of the Scots," and those who continued hammering, while they thought to break, only welded them at every stroke into a harder and more inseparable nationality. It is sometimes said that Scotland carries no lesson for history. Nothing is less true. The history of Scotland has been a perpetual protest against despotism. Its lesson is, first, the power of individualism, and latterly that of the rights of conscience. It was well not only for Britain, but for Europe, that there was one people at least who, from the first, could not brook and had the spirit to withstand government by unqualified prerogative, and the arrogance of feudal domination. It was a grand human instinct which led them to feel that the will of one man never could be counted upon as a righteous law for a nation.

Pope John XXII. was led, through the misrepresentations of the English ambassadors at the Papal Court, to excommunicate the king, Robert Bruce, and lay the kingdom under ecclesiastical ban. The interdict was met by a heroic Parliament held at Arbroath in 1320. Eight earls and twenty-one nobles appended their names to a letter from this Parliament to the Pope, which, for the principle it asserted, was worth any document in European history. It asked the Pope to require the English king to respect the independence of Scotland, and mind his own affairs. "So long as a hundred of us are left alive," say the signatories, "we will never in any degree be subjected to the English. It is not for glory, riches, or honours that we fight, but for liberty alone, which no good man loses but with his life." That

is the spirit and the lesson of Scottish history. It is a spirit and a lesson that will be required through all history.

If we turn, however, from this aggressive influence which welded the people of the Lowlands in one, to their internal relations, we shall find not much unity among them, and but little dependence on the Scottish Crown. There is one element which has not been sufficiently attended to in considering this point, and that is the ground of the tenure of lands in the district. This tenure in some parts of the Lowlands, particularly near the Border, to say nothing of the Debateable Land which lay between the Esk and the Sark, was not always recognised by the owner as flowing from or dependent on the Scottish Crown. During the first War of Independence there no doubt was the forcible extrusion of persons from lands in the Lowlands, especially the Forest, who held them in virtue of English assumptions and English charters. This would be popularly regarded as both meritorious and patriotic. Then, in the troublous times of the fourteenth century, during the contest between the descendants of Bruce and Baliol, there were probably cases of lands being violently taken from the actual holder on very slight pretexts. The only title to these was subsequent continued occupancy. This was deemed enough by popular opinion, or rather by the opinion of the clansmen who depended on the owner, their chief, and profited by his possession. This element tended to render the connection between the laird and the Crown weak, and to place both the laird and his retainers comparatively beyond the reach of law. The

actual proprietor was indeed a little king in his own domain. This comes out in a very marked way in the *Sang of the Outlaw Murray*. This is undoubtedly an old ballad, and refers to some historical transaction not later than the beginning of the sixteenth century—possibly in the time of James IV.[1] In it we find the king represented as actually treating with a subject on something like equal terms. And we find the subject asserting his right to his lands, not as a feudal holding under the Crown, but as something which he had won by his own good sword. The ballad is well known; but it may be useful here to notice some of the main features in it, as throwing light on life and manners in the Forest, within forty miles of the capital, apparently as late as the time of James IV. We have, first of all, the picture of the residence of the Outlaw, no doubt intended for the Castle of Hangingshaw:—

"There's a feir castelle, bigged wi' lyme and stane;
O! gin it stands not pleasauntlie!
In the fore-front o' that castelle feir,
Twa unicorns are bra' to see;
There's the picture of a knyght, and a ladye bright,
And the grene hollin abune their brie.[2]
There an Outlaw kepis five hundred men;
He keepis a royall cumpanie!
His merry men are a' in ae livery clad,
O' the Lincome grene sae gay to see;
He and his ladye in purple clad,
O! gin they lived not royallie!
Word is gane to our nobil King,
In Edinburgh where that he lay,
That there was an Outlaw in Ettricke Foreste,
Counted him nought, nor a' his courtrie gay."

---

[1] See below, ii. 209. [2] Brow.

A messenger is sent by the king, who says:—

"'The King of Scotlonde sent me here,
And, gude Outlaw, I am sent to thee;
I wad wot of whom ye hald your landis,
Or man, wha may thy master be?'"

The answer is characteristic and to be noted:—

"'Thir landis are MINE!' the Outlaw said;
'I ken nae King in Christentie;
Frae Soudron[1] I this Foreste wan,
When the King nor his knightis were not to see.'
'He desyres you'll cum to Edinburgh,
And hauld of him this Foreste fre;
And, gif ye refuse to do this,
He'll conquess baith thy landis and thee.
He hath vowed to cast thy castell down,
And mak a widowe o' thy gaye ladye!
He'll hang thy merrye men, payr by payr,
In ony frith[2] where he may them find.'
'Ay, by my troth,' the Outlaw said,
'Than would I thinke me far behinde.
Ere the King my feir countrie get,
This land that's nativest to me!
Mony o' his nobilis sall be cauld,
Their ladyes sall be right wearie.'"

The king, on hearing this answer, is wroth, and he summons Perth, Angus, Fife, and the Lothians; but the outlaw is not far behind him, for he summons his friends and kinsmen, Halliday of Corehead, Murray of Cockpool, and Murray of Traquair. The king approaches the Forest with his retinue:—

"The King was cuming through Caddon Ford,
And full five thousand men was he;
They saw the derke Foreste them before,
They thought it awsome for to see."

---

[1] Southern. [2] Wood, here place.

The king, however, takes the advice of Lord Hamilton, and, instead of having recourse to violent measures, sends Pringle of Torsonce to treat with the outlaw, and ask him to meet the king at the Permanscore.[1] The outlaw consents, somewhat reluctantly. What weighs with him most is not so much himself or his own interest, but the thought that in this unequal contest with the king others dear to him are likely to be affected by his refusal:—

"'It stands me hard,' the Outlaw said;
'Judge gif it stands na hard wi' me,
Wha reck not losing of mysell,
But a' my offspring after me.
My merrye men's lives, my widow's teirs—
There lies the pang that pinches me;
When I am straight in bluidie eard,
Yon castell will be right dreirie.'"

Even in presence of the king he asserts his original title to his lands:—

"'Thir landis of Ettricke Foreste fair,
I wan them from the enemie;
Like as I wan them, sae will I keep them,
Contrair a' kingis in Christentie."

He is induced, however, to surrender them to the king, who bestows them upon him again as a feudal investiture, and appoints him Sheriff of Ettrick Forest. This makes him directly responsible to the king for the conduct of those dwelling in the Forest. The narrative of the ballad is not to be taken as representing literally an actual transaction; but it is quite impossible that it could have assumed the shape and tone which characterise it, had there not been historical basis for this sort of tenure of land, and a strong popular feeling that con-

[1] Probably Penmanscore.

quest by the sword and broad arrow was a deal better than any form of feudal investiture.

The weakness of central authority led to the constitution of clanship among the Borderers. Of the king or his power, the Borderers—especially those in the central and mountainous districts—knew little; and their respect for him or it was no greater than their knowledge. It was through the combination of the clan that the Borderers protected themselves from each other. It was also in this way that the chiefs, or principal men of the different districts, exercised discipline on those who adhered to them; and it was through those chiefs that the Crown was able to control the lawlessness of their followers, by making the heads of the name or clan surety to satisfy persons injured, or to bring the offender to trial. As, however, it not unfrequently happened that both chief and man were engaged in the same lawless act, depredation on a neighbour's property or attack on his person, the system was far from being effective in repression. It was necessary for the king directly to interfere; and occasionally a vigorous monarch would make himself felt. When outrages became very clamant, the king would suddenly appear in person, with, of course, a strong body-guard, before the gate of some notorious reiver, and hang him then and there, or carry him off straightway to Edinburgh never to see his Border keep again. Both James IV. and his son James V. were distinguished in this line. The former, on the 18th November 1510, rode "furth of Edinburgh" during the night to Jedburgh, and then to Rule Water, apprehended certain reivers there—some 200 Turnbulls—had them

brought before him with halters round their necks and naked swords in their hands, then taken to Jedburgh, where some of them were "justified"—that is, completed the reckoning of their lives by being hanged.[1]

When the winter snows had vanished from the hills in the spring of 1529-30, the king, James V., had apparently thought it full time to make an example of certain Border reivers. This was the blackest spring they had experienced. The king rode into the glens of the Yarrow and the Ettrick at the head of a considerable force, and seized certain notorious offenders. These were William Cokburne of Henderland, and Adam Scott of Tuschielaw. The popular tradition is that the one was hanged over his own gate at Henderland Tower, and the other on the historic ash-tree which till lately bore the marks of the frequent rope, as it stood a solitary symbol of feudal power by the grim and grand ruins of Tuschielaw. This is perhaps a popular fancy of what ought to have been the local and specific retribution in each case; but the fact seems to be that there was some regard, at least, to the forms of justice, for both Cokburne and Scott were taken to Edinburgh and duly tried there. On May 16, 1530, William Cokburne of Henderland was convicted, in presence of the king, "of high treason, committed by him in bringing Alexander Forestare and his son, Englishmen, to the plundering of Archibald Somerville; and for treasonably bringing certain Englishmen to the lands of Glenquhome." His lands were forfeited, and he himself beheaded.[2]

[1] Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials*, i. *67.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1530, *temp.* 17, Iac. V., i. *144; v. *271.

This is, no doubt, the true account of the matter. A stone in the old and now deserted burying-place attached to what was the chapel, near the Tower of Henderland, has the inscription, "Here lyis Perys of Cokburne and hys wife Marjory." But this is evidently not the laird who was executed. There can be no doubt that the man who suffered was the William Cokburne referred to in Pitcairn's *Trials*.[1] His son, also William, in 1542, lodged a petition against the justice of the sentence, and of the forfeiture, and he seems to have got the lands of his father restored to him.[2] The wonderfully pathetic and touching ballad—*The Widow's Lament*—probably refers to the apprehension of Cokburne. The poor widow may have asked and got the body back from Edinburgh, and superintended its burial in a very lonely fashion. The retainers of a condemned and beheaded reiver were likely to be scanty enough. It must be remarked also that the ballad itself says nothing of where the knight was executed; it speaks only of his having been slain by the king at the instigation of a foe, and of the widow burying him by herself in a heart-broken way. Though the verses are well known, I make no excuse for quoting them in full. They belong to the simplest, yet truest and most pathetic poetry:—

[1] The Cokburnes had evidently been a turbulent lot. At the Justice Aire of Peebles, in 1498, "Edward Cokburne produced a remission for the slaughter of Roger Twedy, in company with the Laird of Hennirlande. William Cokburne of Hennyrlande became surety to satisfy the parties." At the same time and place "Sir William Cokburne of Scraling, Knight [Skirling, in Peeblesshire], produced a remission for art and part of the slaughter of Walter Twedie, son of John Twedy of Drava, in Peeblis."—Pitcairn, i. *26.

[2] Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials*, i. *145.

"My love he built me a bonny bower,
And clad it a' wi' lilye[1] flouir,
A brawer bower ye ne'er did see,
Than my true love he built for me.

There came a man, by middle day,
He spied his sport, and went away;
And brought the King that very night,
Who brake my bower, and slew my knight.

He slew my knight to me sae dear,
He slew my knight and poin'd[2] his gear;
My servants a' for life did flee,
And left me in extremitie.

I sew'd his sheet, making my mane;
I watch'd the corpse, myself alane,
I watch'd his body, night and day;
No living creature came that way.

I bore his body on my back,
And whiles I gaed, and whiles I sat;
I digg'd a grave, and laid him in,
And happ'd him wi' the sod sae green.

But think na ye my heart was sair,
When I laid the moul on his yellow hair;
O think na ye my heart was wae,
When I turned aboot away to gae?

Nae living man I'll love again,
Since that my comely knight is slain;
Wi' ae lock o' his yellow hair,
I'll chain my heart for evermair."[3]

A not less memorable case of "justification" was that of Adam Scott of Tuschielaw, "the King of the Borders,"

[1] Some inappropriate criticism has been made on this line by Mr Child. *Lilye* here has plainly what it generally has in the Border ballads, the force of an adjective, and means simply pale-yellow. *Lily leven* of the ballads means a flowering space or lawn of the early spring yellow.

[2] Literally, distrained; Cokburne's estate was escheat to the Crown.

[3] See below, ii. 209.

otherwise "King of Theivis"—a great name then among the clan of the Scotts. This has come as clearly and distinctly down to us by oral tradition as any event in Border history. Yet tradition seems to have made the same mistake as in the case of Cokburne of Henderland. For Scott was not hanged on the traditional and proper ash-tree, but, like Cokburne, was tried and beheaded in Edinburgh. He was convicted there on the 18th of May 1530, "of art and part of the theftuously taking Blackmail, from the time of his entry within the Castle of Edinburgh, in ward from John Browne in Hoprow; and for art and part of theftuously taking of Blackmail from Andrew Thorbrand and William his brother; also from the poor tenants of Hopcailzow, and of art and part of theftuously taking Blackmail from the tenants of Eschescheill."[1] "Beheaded" is the curt and ominous sequel to the conviction. As all these places are in Peeblesshire, we get a glimpse of the ordinary sphere of his depredations as on the banks of the Tweed. These he, no doubt, found richer in grain than the unploughed haughs and hills of the Ettrick. We have no ballad commemorating the death of Tuschielaw. If any ever existed it has perished. It is somewhat odd that the fall of so prominent a man was not thus commemorated. Besides the ballad referring to Cokburne of Henderland, there was chanted for a long time in the Forest a set of pathetic verses commemorating the death of Murray of Ettrick Forest on the brae of Newark, by the emissaries, if not the very hand, of Buccleuch. These stanzas have unfortunately perished. The fate of Armstrong of Gil-

[1] Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials*, i. *145—1530.

nockie, to be immediately referred to, was embalmed in a noble poem. Perhaps the blackmail levy with which Scott was charged, and the ominous notches of the rope on the ash-tree by his tower—now, alas! only a ruined stump [1]—may lead us to suspect that popular feeling rather sympathised in this case with the action of the king than with the deeds of the reiver.

The king, in his Border raid, had further either brought back or summoned to Edinburgh certain lairds who had secretly aided the reivers, or who had not exercised their authority to repress their depredations. Some of these were put in ward in the castles of Edinburgh, Blackness, and Dumbarton. Among them were the Earl of Bothwell, who was finally banished the kingdom, the Lords Maxwell, Home, Lairds Buccleuch (called Balcleuch), Farnyhirst, Pollock [? Polwarth], Johnestoun, and Mark Ker. These lords and lairds were doubtless not the least anxious to repress the reivers; they found them most useful auxiliaries as means of revenge, and trouble to hostile neighbours, when it suited them to employ them. The king, besides, had a strong apprehension that "they secreitlie should rayse weir betwixt the realmes." Their allegiance was, in fact, so unsteady from their intermediate position between the English and Scottish king, and from the severity with which the latter had treated several of the principal Borderers, that the intriguing Bothwell might have cast the balance in favour of England. Besides warding those mentioned, he made certain barons and

[1] The tree was burnt through the carelessness of some boys a few years ago.

lairds of Roxburgh, Berwick, Peebles, and Selkirk find surety to enter before the justice when required.

The following barons and lairds of Peeblesshire found caution in various sums to enter before the justice, on a warning of fifteen days, to underlie the law for all crimes to be imputed against them—viz.: John, Lord Hay of Yester; William Murray of Rommanose (Romanno); William Stewart of Trakware; Thomas Myddilmaist of Grestoune;[1] John Tuedy of Drummelzeare; William Guvane of Cardrono; William Vache of Dawik; John Sandelands of that Ilk; Mr John Hay of Smeithfield;[2] Patrick Portuus of Halkschawis; Alexander Tayt of Pyrne. Among the barons and lairds of Selkirkshire who found caution for the same cause are John Vache [probably of Synton] and William Hunter of Polmude,[3] though Polmude is in Peeblesshire.

We find a later entry, August 17 of the same year, to the following effect: "John Lord Hay of Yester, became in the Kingis Will, for negligence committed by Mr John Hay his brother, in outputting Adam Nyksone, and one called Elwald, common Thieves, given to him in custody by the King, in name of the said Lord Hay of Yester, as Sheriff Principal of Peebles. The Justice commanded him to ward within the town of Linlithgow, until his Majesty's will should be declared."[4]

But the summer of the same year, 1530, was to witness a still more signal example of stern punishment by the same monarch. This was the execution, appa-

[1] Originally Grevestoun, on the Tweed near Traquair—now part of that estate. Probably Sheriff's Town.

[2] That is, *Smooth-field;* now corrupted into Smithfield.

[3] Pitcairn, under May 19, 1530.

[4] Pitcairn, i. *149.

rently even without form of trial, of the laird of Gilnockie—Johnie Armstrong—and most of his followers, at Caerlanrig, in Teviotdale. "It is somewhat singular," says Pitcairn, "that the circumstances, as they are detailed in the popular ballad or song, are substantially correct; and there cannot now be a doubt that Armstrong was most basely betrayed and put to death, even without the mockery of a form of trial." [1] The expedition during which this act took place was arranged, apparently, to unite pleasure and business. Towards the end of June, on the summons of the king, the Earls of Huntlie, Argyll, and Atholl, "with many othir Lordis and Gentlemen, to the number of twelf thousand, assemblet at Edinburgh, and thair fra went with the kingis grace to Meggatland, in the quhilkis bounds war slaine, at that tyme, aughteine scoir of deir." [2] It was particularly mentioned that the Highland earls were to bring their deer-hounds with them, and this was the result of the sport. The hunting of the deer, however, must have taken place mainly during the return journey, when the party was at Cramalt, from the 15th to the 18th. The king was at Peebles on the 2d July. Thence he crossed the hills to the Yarrow on the 4th, pitching his tents near the Douglas Burn. On the 5th the king and his followers rode across the hills to Caerlanrig in Upper Teviotdale, where he met, according to a form of summons which was held morally to imply protection to the parties, John Armstrong of Gilnockie and his twenty-four well-appointed horsemen.[3]

[1] *Criminal Trials*, i. *153. [2] Lindesay of Pitscottie.
[3] The number is variously stated at thirty-six and sixty.

According to one version of the story, some words arose between the king and Armstrong, and the former, yielding to his somewhat hot and impulsive temper, ordered Gilnockie and nearly all his band to be hanged there and then; or, according to another, and quite as likely an account, the king was instigated to this unjustifiable deed by Robert, Lord Maxwell, who was glad to have a rival judicially executed, when he could not have him cut off in another way. The truth seems to have been, that, while Armstrong and his followers were on their way to the king, on invitation, but without an express letter of protection—trusting, in fact, to his honour—they were surprised by a band of men provided for the purpose, and brought before the king, as if they had been apprehended against their will. It is certainly odd that, while Henderland and Tuschielaw were taken to Edinburgh and underwent a judicial process, Gilnockie was really hanged, without form of trial, where he met the king. Both Cokburne and Scott were reivers whose depredations were made upon their neighbours, while it was the pardonable boast of Armstrong that his marauding was entirely on the other side of the Border—in fact, a useful subject to the Scottish king, to be commended rather than hanged.

The rich apparel of Armstrong and his retainers was not to be wondered at. He levied tribute in England from the Scottish Border to Newcastle. The king, on seeing him and his retinue, suddenly fell into one of his wrathful moods. "Throwardly he turned about his face, and bid tak' that tirrant out of his sight, saying, 'What wants yon knave that a king sould have?' Gilnockie, with

the instinct of a true Borderer, addressed the king very persuasively, but in vain. Then the old Borderer proudly turned upon the Stuart and said: 'I am bot ane fooll to seik grace at ane graceless face. But had I knawin, sir, that ye would have taken my lyff this day, I sould have leved upoun the Borderis in disphyte of King Harie and yow baith, for I know King Harie wald doun weigh my best hors with gold to knaw that I war condemned to die this day.'" [1]

My Lord Maxwell got for his reward in this matter a gift of all the personal and heritable property of Armstrong (July 8, 1530). The ballad which commemorates the fate of Armstrong and his followers is one of the finest of the historical class, and has some wonderfully picturesque and lifelike touches. Popular feeling was entirely on the side of the victim on this occasion; and the long-cherished belief in the withered trees, which bore the bodies of the doomed men, was inspired by a strong sense of the harshness and injustice of the execution:—

"The trees on which the Armstrongs deed
Wi' summer leaves were gay,
But lang afore the harvest tide,
They wither'd a' away."

After Armstrong had petitioned hard for his life, and the king had ordered him to death as a traitor, we have the spirited reply:—

"'Ye lied, ye lied, now, King,' he says,
'Altho' a King and Prince ye be!
For I've luved naething in my life,
I weel dare say it, save honesty—

[1] Pitscottie's *Chronicle*, ii. 342, 343.

Save a fat horse and a fair woman,
Twa bonny dogs to kill a deir;
But England suld have found me meal and mault,
Gif I had lived this hundred yeir!

She suld have found me meal and mault,
And beef and mutton in a' plentie;
But never a Scots wyfe could have said,
That e'er I skaithed[1] her a puir flee.

To seik het water beneith cauld ice,
Surely it is a greit folie—
I have asked grace at a graceless face,
But there is nane for my men and me!

But had I kenn'd ere I cam frae hame,
How thou unkind wadst been to me!
I wad have keipit the Border side,
In spite of all thy force and thee!

Wist England's King that I was taen,
O gin a blythe man he wad be!
For anes I slew his sister's son,
And on his breist bane brak a tree.'

. . . . . .

There hang nine targats[2] at Johnie's hat,
And ilk ane worth three hundred poun'—
'What wants that knave that a king should have,
But the sword of honour and the crown?

O where got thou these targats, Johnie,
That blink sae brawlie abune thy brie?'[3]
'I gat them in the field fechting,
Where, cruel King, thou durst not be!

. . . . . .

Farewell! my bonny Gilnock Hall,
Where on the Esk side thou standest stout!
Gif I had lived but seven yeirs mair,
I wad hae gilt thee round about.'

---

[1] Harmed. [2] Tassels. [3] Brow.

John murdered was at Carlinrigg,
And all his gallant companie;
But Scotland's heart was ne'er sae wae,
To see sae mony brave men die,—

Because they saved their country deir
Frae Englishmen! Nane were sa bauld,
Whyle Johnie lived on the Border side,
Nane of them durst come neir his hauld."

I may mention that I have heard the greater part of this ballad recited long before I read it in Scott's *Minstrelsy*, and by one who had never seen the *Minstrelsy* or read the ballad in print. There were a few variations—particularly the following instead of the lines as now printed:—

"So to seek grace frae a graceless face,
When there's nane for my men or me."

And—

"Where gat ye that girdle, Johnie,
That blinks sae brawlie abune yer brie?
I gat it in the field o' battle,
Where, cowardly King, thou durst na be."

This is a small piece of evidence, if any were needed, that the ballad was known before Scott's time, and quite independently of the *Minstrelsy*.

Gilnock Hall or Gilnockie stood on the east bank of the Esk adjoining the northern boundary of the lands of the Priory of Canonbie. Nothing of it now remains. It was probably destroyed either immediately after the execution of its laird, or in 1547, when several Border strongholds were demolished by order of the Governor of Scotland. Its foundations were cleared away only to-

wards the end of last century.[1] The Holehouse, Hollos, or Hollows Tower, on the other side of the river, higher up, still remains fairly preserved. It retains on its south gable the picturesque turret, whence the beacon showed against the sky its warning and thrilling flame for all the water. The Hollows, as it is called in modern times, is usually stated to have been the residence of the famous raider, Johnie Armstrong. If so, Johnie must have had two towers, one on each side of the river. We have a very distinct account of the burning of Holehouse in February 1527-28 by Lord Dacre, the English Warden. But for this reference, I should have supposed that the Holehouse was built after 1535, the plan of it being in accordance with the specifications of the Act of Parliament of that date. Whether it was Holehouse or Gilnockie that was burnt at this time, the facts show that the Armstrongs were equal to the occasion. They had got quiet notice of the intention of my Lord Dacre. Sande Armstrong had happened to be housed a night or two before in Cumberland with Archie Graham; and Archie, having much more sympathy with Border reivers, and especially with Armstrongs, their neighbours in the Debateable Land, than with English governors and their law, told Sande of the design against his clan; and Sande was swift and sure-footed. The result was that Johnie Armstrong and his friends, having got a quiet notice of Lord Dacre's purpose, left their own tower in the Debateable Land early in the morning, made a little bit of a circuit over the hills which they knew so well,

[1] *Dumfricsshire Trans. Debateable Land*, as quoted.

and as a *quid pro quo*, just when the Lord Warden was burning their poor tower by the Esk, "afore none" they were burning Netherby, his much more important place in Cumberland, and also harrying his cattle.

After the father's unjustifiable execution, Christie, the son, went or was carried to England, whence, of course, in due time he made raids on the Scottish Border. It is satisfactory, however, to find that he finally became reconciled to the Maxwells and Scotland, and that some recompense was made to him, owing, probably, to the widespread and increasing feeling of the injustice and treachery done to his father. Christie, on granting a bond of man-rent to John, Lord Maxwell, in 1557, got back the mails and dues of the lands of Gilnockie, and others that had been escheat to the Crown, and gifted to Robert, Lord Maxwell. Further, in 1562, Christie was intrusted with the office of collector of the revenues of the Maxwell lands in Eskdale. He accompanied the Lord Maxwell on his famous raid to Stirling Castle in 1585. Whether Christie took a part in the secret night retreat with the captive horses or not, I cannot say. A Borderer, however, was always ready to retreat, provided he had got a hold of the booty.

The result of these stern measures was that the Borders were quieted for the remainder of the king's lifetime. He died 14th December 1542. Sir David Lyndsay, in *The Complaint*, thus refers to his dealings with the law-breakers of the time:—

> "Justice holds her sword on high,
> With her balance of equity;
> And in this realm hath made such order
> Both through the Highland and the Border,

That Oppression and all his fellows
Are hangèd high upon the gallows.
. . . . . .
John upon-land[1] been glad, I trow,
Because the rush bush keeps the cow."

After the king's death, and during the queen-dowager's regency, matters appear speedily to have returned to their former condition. And they were never worse than in the two years from 1559 to 1561, when, the queen-dowager being deprived of office, there was no settled government in the country. It is to this period that we may refer the ballad of Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington *Aganis the Theivis of Liddisdaill.*[2] They had become very bold, and extended their depredations beyond their usual bounds into parts inconveniently near Maitland's own lands. The account of them is curious and picturesque, and interesting as drawn by a contemporary hand, and the poem affords a good specimen of the Lowland Scottish language in the time of Mary:—

"Of Liddisdaill the commoun theifis
Sae pertlie steillis now and reiffis,[3]
That nane may keip
Hors, nolt, nor scheip: nor yit dar sleip
For thair mischiefis.

They plainlie through the cuntrie rydis;
I trow the meikill devill thame gydis!
Quhair they onsett,
Ay in thair gait[4] thair is na yett,[5]
Nor dure[6] thame bydis.[7]
. . . . . .

[1] The farmer. [2] See Sibbald's *Scottish Poetry*, iii. 104.
[3] This is the old Northumbrian plural of the verb. [4] Road.
[5] Gate, way. *Gait* is Scandinavian—Swedish, *gata*, a road: *yett* is Saxon.
[6] Door. [7] Hinders.

Thay thiefis have neirhand[1] herreit[2] haill
Ettrick Forest, and Lauderdaill;
Now ar they gane
In Lothiane; and spairis nane
That they will waill.[3]
. . . . . .
Bot[4] commoun taking of blak maill,
Thay that had flesche and breid and aill,
Now ar sa wraikit,
Maid puir and naikit; fane to be slaikit[5]
With watter-caill."[6]

Each of the depredators had a nickname or "to-name," and Maitland mentions the principal ones, with their characteristics:—

"Thai theifs that steillis, and tursis[7] hame,
Ilk ane of thame hes ane *to-name;*
Will of the Lawis,
Hab of the Shawis; to mak bair wawis[8]
They think na schame.

Bayth hen and cok,
With reil and rok,[9] the Laird's Jok
All with him takis.

Johne of the Park[10]
Ryps[11] kist[12] and ark; for all sic wark
He is richt meit.

He is weil kend, Johne of the Syde;
A gretar theif did never ryide:

---

[1] Almost. [2] Plundered. [3] Choose, select.
[4] Besides, or perhaps without. [5] Other reading *staikit*, to be satisfied.
[6] Water-broth. [7] Pack and carry. [8] Walls.
[9] Spinning-wheel and distaff. Scott glosses it "both the spinning instrument and the yarn."
[10] An Elliott, who afterwards, in a hand-to-hand encounter, wounded Bothwell, and was himself killed by the earl.
[11] Searches. [12] Chest or trunk, kind of wooden box.

He never tyris
For to brek byris ; our muir and myris,
Our gude can gyde."

Clement's Hob is the last of the reiving list, and the writer very shrewdly puts his finger on the source of the evil when he says—

"To sic grit stouth[1] quha eir wald trow[2] it
But gif sum greit man it allowit?
Rycht sair I rew
Thoch it be trew, thair is sa few
That dar avow it."

Soon after Queen Mary's government was settled, strong measures were taken for the repression of those disorders. But the poem, apart from other evidence, shows of how little efficacy was the plan by which the more turbulent spirits were supposed to be kept in check, through their head or the chief of their name, who, as the legal phrase of the term went, became surety "to satisfy parties," after any deed of blood, or outbreak of slaughter, or unwarranted raid on a neighbour's goods. If the culprit had no chief to come forward for him, he was regarded as a "broken" man, and usually hanged—not for the crime, but for deficiency in bail. As to the *satisfying* the parties, this must have been exceedingly inefficacious, as we find the satisfaction repeated innumerable times without the slightest apparent result in staying depredation or the feud of blood. Still this tie of clanship, and control by means of it—often cemented by a bond of man-rent—was the only sort of organisation that availed on the Borders for a long period. It was the one

[1] Theft. [2] Believe—Icel. *trua.*

check on brute force and violence. And it helps us to understand the social life and history of those Borderers. Occupying an isolated portion of the country between England and Scotland, and having to depend chiefly on themselves for protection from the Southern foe, and from each other, the combination of clans and families was perfectly natural. The Scottish king showed his weakness to deal with them, especially with their aggressions on England, so plainly, as even in time of peace to give the English king a legal power of retaliation, which was frequently exercised with the most savage cruelty.

Thus, divided into clans and combinations of families for protection, we need not wonder at the rise and subsistence through centuries of the family feuds, which appear to us so bloody and disgraceful. The feeling of revenge for injury to the person and for violent death is a trait of character which the Lowlander inherited from his Anglo-Saxon ancestry. It is rooted, no doubt, in a certain moral conception that the person or personality of a man is the most sacred thing about him, and the corresponding notion that any despite done to that must be wiped out in blood. It was this kind of notion which led the old Anglo-Saxon to feel that death even was preferable to captivity when he was taken in battle—that now, being no longer his own, but another's, his personality was degraded. So strong was this feeling, that if a man of good Saxon family should happen to be taken in battle, and prefer captivity to immediate death, he was regarded as a disgrace to his line, and often summarily despatched by his own blood relations. This sense of

the absolute need of retaliation for hurt or death to the person, ruled the actions and the social history of the Border Scot from the earliest times to a period past the Union of the Crowns. It was at the root of the national struggle for life, when life meant mainly physical being and wellbeing. So strong was it in the middle period of our history, that it was transmitted from sire to son for successive generations through hundreds of years. Collateral branches of a family were not exempt from an obligation to be instruments of retaliation, or a liability to be the victims of it at the hands of the relatives of the stricken man. Our whole social life on the Borders for hundreds of years is full of instances of this kind of feeling. The Church even for a time recognised its power, if not its propriety. It was customary in these counties for long "to leave the right hand of male children unchristened, that it might deal the more deadly, in fact the more *unhallowed* blow to the enemy. By this rite they were devoted to bear the family feud or enmity." [1]

"Alas! that Scottish maid should sing
The combat where her lover fell!
That Scottish bard should wake the string
The triumph of our foes to tell!
Yet Teviot's sons with high disdain,
Have kindled at the thrilling strain
That mourned their martial father's bier;
And, at the sacred fount, the priest
Through ages left the master hand unblest,
To urge, with keener aim, the blood-encrusted spear." [2]

Now this seems to us a shocking sentiment; and no

[1] *Minstrelsy*, vii. 144.

[2] *Ode on Visiting Flodden*, John Leyden.

doubt it is not morally justifiable, on any high ethical code, or under a perfect system of social order or law. But in these trying times there was no protection in central authority for the weak or injured. There was neither defence nor retaliation, except such as the survivors of the slaughtered man could give. The sense of personal dignity and family preservation was all that could be looked to in the matter. And I can quite understand how such a feeling should keep retaliation warm in men's breasts. At any rate it has been finely used for emotional effect in the retrospective poetry of our times. There is that grand scene in the early part of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which has somehow a mysterious yet powerful hold on our sympathies :—

> "In sorrow o'er Lord Walter's bier
> The warlike foresters had bent ;
> And many a flower and many a tear,
> Old Teviot's maids and matrons lent :
> But o'er her warrior's bloody bier
> The Ladye dropped nor flower nor tear !
> Vengeance deep-brooding o'er the slain,
> Had locked the source of softer woe ;
> And burning pride and high disdain,
> Forbade the rising tear to flow.
> Until, amid his sorrowing clan,
> Her son lisped from the nurse's knee,
> 'And if I live to be a man,
> My father's death revenged shall be.'
> Then fast the mother's tears did seek
> To dew the infant's kindling cheek."

These lines have been regarded, and justly, as among the finest in the poetry of Scott. They evidence, without doubt, a deep, true, and subtle insight into the workings of human emotion. But the pith of them is not his own.

They are simply a transcript—no doubt an unconscious one—but still almost a literal transcript from an old ballad by a nameless author. Here is the original from *Johnny Armstrong's Last Good Night*[1]:—

> "O then bespoke his little son,
> As he sat on the nurse's knee,
> If ever I live to be a man,
> My father's death revenged shall be."

These lines were in Scott's ear when he wrote the stanzas given above. He had simply forgotten that they were a memory.

Now and again we note a curious touch of relenting on the part of the Border lairds for the red-handed deeds in which they had a share. In 1473 a chaplainry was founded at the altar of St John the Baptist in the Parish Kirk of St Andrew in Peebles, with the end mainly of saying prayers and celebrating masses for the health of the souls of "James Tuedy of Drummelzier, William Cockburne of Henriland [Henderland], Paul Vaich [Veitch] of Dawic, Patrick Lowis of Menner, George Elphinstone of Henristone [now called Hayston], and Thomas Dekisone of Ormistone, and of their ancestors and successors, and also of the souls of all who have paid the debt of all flesh in wars or combats ('in guerris sive duellis') between the foresaid parties." These were the lairds of the district whose estates were divided simply by a burn, whose families, moreover, usually intermarried, and who yet, when the absence of English invasion gave them no bond of unity, were occupied in constant red-

[1] Evan's *Ballads*, iii. 106.

handed feuds. Memories of the slaughter of fathers, and even remote relations, were handed down to sons, as a heritage and obligation of revenge. Yet it indicated something of softening that they recognised the need of praying for a mercy to the dead, which they were in no way disposed to extend to the living.

After the accession of James VI. the central government became stronger, and the civilising effects of the Reformation spread over the country. The state, however, of Highlands and Borders did not greatly improve. "The sterfull reife, thieft or receipt of thieft, depredationes, open and avowed, fire-raising, upon deadly feedes" continued, and were carried on apparently by a lower class than formerly. The servants and tenants of the lairds, and "broken men," were the chief direct instruments; the "landis-lords," if they were cognisant of the irregularities, kept in the background. Cattle-lifting was evidently now not so respectable a pursuit as when the daughter of "the Flower of Yarrow"—who had become the wife of Scott of Harden—married Gilbert Elliott of Stobbs, known as "Gibbie with the gowden garters." Gibbie found it inconvenient, somehow, to take home his bride from Harden, and left her for a month or so after marriage with her parents. But the old people were resolved not to keep the lady for nothing. Gibbie was accordingly bound over to pay for his wife's keep with her parents, and the price, according to agreement, was the full plunder of "the first harvest moon." This was thoroughly in keeping with the Harden motto, "Phœbe reparabit cornua," or, freely translated, "We'll hae moonlight to-night again."

In the eleventh Parliament of James VI., July 1587, certain very stringent Acts were passed with a view to the repression of these crying disorders. There was to be a special meeting of Privy Council on the first lawful day of every month, with a view to hear and decide on complaints;[1] all "Landlords and Baillies of the landes on the Bordours and in the Hie-landes quhair broken men has dwelt, or presentlie dwells, sal be charged to find caution and souertie" that they apprehend the malefactors and present them for trial;[2] further, as many of the tenants and dwellers on the lands of the lairds acknowledge the order and depend upon "Captaines, chieffes, and chieftaines of clannes, als-weill on the Hie-land, as on the Bordours," "against the wil ofttimes of the Lord of the ground," these chiefs are called upon to lodge persons as pledges at the nomination of the Secret Council, with a view to restrain disorder.[3]

Again, all men born in "Liddis-daill, Esk-daill, Annandaill, and the landes, sum-time called Debaitable,[4] or in the lands of the Hie-lands," who have long continued disobedient, are to be removed out of their present dwellings in the "Inland," unless their landlords become surety for them.[5]

The following is "the roll of the names of the Landislords and Baillies of Landes dwelling on the Bordoures quhair broken men has dwelt and presentlie dwellis, to the quhilk roll, the 94 Acte of this Parliament is relative":—"*Middle March.*—The Erle Both-well; the

[1] Cap. 92. [2] Cap. 93. [3] Cap. 94.

[4] This was a tract of land lying between the Esk and the Sark. It was divided between the two kingdoms in 1552. See vol. ii. 149 *et seq.*

[5] Cap. 95.

Laird of Farnie-hirst; the Erle of Angus; the Laird of Buck-cleuch; the Schireffe of Teviot-daill; the Laird of Bed-roule; the Laird of Wauchop; the Lord Hereis; the Laird of How-paislay; George Turne-bull of Hal-roule; the Laird of Littill-dene; the Laird of Drum-langrig; the Laird of Chisholme.

"*West March.*—The Lord Maxwell; the Laird of Drum-langrig; the Laird of Johnestoun; the Laird of Aple-girth; the Laird of Holmends; the Laird of Gratnay; the Lord Hereis; the Laird of Dum-widdie; the Laird of Lochin-war." [1]

We have also "the roll of the clannes that hes captaines and chieftaines quhom on they depende, oftimes against the willes of their Landis-lordes, alsweill on the Bordours, as Hielandes, and of sum special persones of Braunches of the saidis clannes." Those of the Borders are:—

"*Middle Marche.* — Ellottes; Arme-stranges; Nick-sonnes; Crosers.

"*West Marche.* — Scottes of Eusdaill; Beatisonnes; Littles; Thomsonnes; Glendunninges; Irvinges; Belles; Carrutheres; Grahames; Johnstones; Jardanes; Moffettes; Latimers." [2]

The quenching of the deadly feuds of the Lowlands was a still harder task than the repression of reif and depredations on neighbours' lands. The habit of personal retaliation for personal injury had for centuries been, as we have seen, an almost constituent part of the social feeling of the Lowlander. The moral right of self-defence, in districts where the law was powerless to pro-

[1] *Acts of the Scots Parliament*—Eleventh Parliament, James VI.
[2] *Ibid.*

tect the injured or punish the aggressor, had risen to a very positive ethical code. The nearest kinsman of the injured or slain was bound to take up the quarrel; any of his kinsmen might take upon himself the duty of revenge; and any relative of the man who had done the hurt was liable to have the wrath of the avenger directed against him. Family feuds of the deadliest sort thus naturally subsisted from father to son, through many centuries, in a self-generating manner. In dealing with such a state of things it was very difficult properly to apportion the wrong. Hence, all through the Acts of James VI. there is a certain recognition, if not of the intrinsic propriety of the custom, at least of its use and wont, and of the necessity of submitting each instance still subsisting to arbitration, with a decided allowance for the balance of mutual reprisals that might have taken place. In the sixteenth Parliament, November 1600, this spirit comes out very clearly. It passed an Act entitled, "Anent removing and extinguishing of Deadly Fead." The king and Estates of Parliament, "for removing of the deadly feads that abounds within the Realme," find it expedient "that the parties be charged to compeir before his Heighness and Secret Counsell, to submit to twa or three friends on either side; or to subscryve ane submission, formed and sent by his Majestie to them to be subscryved." The friends are to decern within thirty days, or to agree at their first meeting on an "overs-man." His Majesty is overs-man or arbiter, in the case of disagreement. The Act proceeds: "Because all feads are ane of thir thrie natures, namely, that there is either na slaughter upon either side,

or slaughter upon ane side only; or else slaughter upon both sides. The parties in the first may be commanded to agree, due satisfaction being offered, and performed at the sight of friends and overs-man in maner foresaid. Where there is slaughter upon both sides, his Majestie may by rigour and equalitie of justice compel them to agree, due satisfaction to be made on either side, according to the qualitie of the offence and persons offended. Where the slaughter is onely on the ane side, the party grieved can not refuse in reason to submit in maner foresaid, al quarrel he can beare to any person innocent, justice being made patent to him against the giltie."[1]

One of the last acts of James VI., before he left for England, was to visit in person the district of Upper Tweeddale, with a view to stanch the bloody feud which for some centuries had subsisted between the lairds of Drummelzier and Dawyck. This feud between the Tweedies and the Veitches is a curious illustration of the old Border life, and needs a few sentences of narrative. The principal estate of the Veitches—that of Dawyck—was bounded on the west or upper side of the Tweed by that of Drummelzier, the property of the Tweedies from the time that a man of that name succeeded, in the fourteenth century, to Laurence Fraser or Frisel of Drummelzier, apparently marrying his daughter. Tweedie, hitherto utterly unnoticed in documents, now became a person of consequence. Dawyck and Drummelzier were both early baronies, and thus on a footing. Both names had cadets, allies, and retainers. The principal estates of the two families on Tweedside were of about equal value, but the

[1] Sixteenth Parliament, cap. 22.

Veitches had other lands besides in Peebles and Selkirk shires. The Veitches owned estates, what now would be regarded as considerable farms, from Sheriff Hall, near Dalkeith, on a line southwards, including Kingside, Courhope, Stewarton, and Lyne; and nearly opposite Lyne, on the Tweed, was the principal property of Dawyck. They had also as early as 1404 the principal part of the barony of Manor. In Tweedsmuir they had Glenbreck; and down the Tweed and up the Quair they had Fechan and The Glen. In Selkirkshire they had Corslee (Crosslee), North Syntoun, Clerklands, and Bowhill. The Laird of Dawyck had thus a large backing of followers, and at need could hold his own. The Tweedies had, besides Drummelzier, cadets in Dreva and other places, and they had allies in the Crichtons of Cardon and in Porteous of Hawkshaw. Latterly they had Chapelhope on the Loch of the Lowes. The estate of Barns was immediately to the east of Dawyck, lower down the river. But it was never a barony, and the land had thus no baronial rights. Curiously enough, there was for some generations a feud between the Veitches and their neighbours, the Tweedies, on the west; while there is not the slightest indication that there occurred even one conflict between the Burnets and the Veitches. The Tweedies were reputed turbulent and aggressive, and as in the habit of levying toll or mail on travellers through Upper Tweeddale. Among the persons "delaittit of the slaughter of David Riccio," 19th March 1565-66, are "William Twedy of Drummelzeare, Adame Twedy of Dreva, Johne Brown of Cultirmains."[1] It is probable that this old blood-feud arose from some

[1] *Council Records*, i. 432.

early deed of slaughter on the part either of Tweedy or Veitch. This was quite fitted to leave its deadly trail on the generations of the families. Some early intermarriages had taken place between the Burnets and the Veitches, and so tended to social alliance. In the fifteenth century, John Burnet of Barns married Sybilla Veitch of the family of Dawyck. She died between 1495 and 1497. She is buried with her husband, according to his will, under the east oriel window of St Gordian's Church, now part of the green mounds that mark the site of the ancient kirk. There, in the sacred enclosure, many of the old lairds and ladies of Manor and Tweed are lying; and the old life, the old feuds, and the old loves are all alike hushed in the sough of the passing burn, and covered by the greenery of graves, whose occupants no one can now distinguish.

The son of John Burnet, by a second wife, Mariot Inglis, of the family of Murdieston and Manor, married Elizabeth Veitch of the house of Dawyck, and their grandson was William Burnet, locally known as "the Hoolet [1] of Barns." Contemporary with "the Hoolet" was William Veitch, laird, and known as "the Deil" of Dawyck, who lived nearly all through the sixteenth century. Both were men of immense stature, enormous physical strength, and undaunted courage. They lived to a great old age. "The Hoolet" is credited with one hundred and seven years. They were relations by blood, and constant allies in feuds and raids. "The Hoolet" got his name because he was supposed to see as well in the mirk night as in the daylight. "The

[1] Owlet or owl.

Deil" got his *sobriquet* because it was believed that no one ever rose up from under his sword-stroke. The two were often together in the "Hot-Trod," for their estates and those of their neighbours in Peeblesshire were frequently visited and harried by the Southern and even nearer marauders. And they had their privilege of the Commissioners of England and Scotland in 1398, when it was ordained and accorded "that all manner of men of baith rewms sal hafe fredome to follow their gudes that beis stollen or restit frae thaim, with hunde and horne, out of the ta rewme into the toyir, at their lyking, or in quhat gudely manner to them byste." Or as it is more picturesquely put in the words of the speaker in *The Black Dwarf:* "Just put a lighted peat on the end of a spear, or hay-fork, or siclike, and blaw a horn, and cry the gathering-word, and then it's lawful to follow gear into England, and recover it by the strong hand, or to take gear frae some other Englishman, providing ye lift nae mair than's been lifted frae you. That's the auld Border law, made at Dundrennan in the days of the Black Douglas."

Clearly enough the relationship between the Veitches and the Burnets—their neighbours on the east—was that of close friendship through the centuries. They had had foes on the west in those of the name of Tweedy, Crichton, and Porteous. The Veitches had usually for their allies besides the Burnets, Geddes of Rachan, a very old family, with which they had intermarried. It is now extinct, but it gave us, in the last century, the cultured Cambridge scholar—prematurely cut off—James Geddes, the author of *An Essay on the Composition and Manner*

of Writing of the Ancients, particularly Plato.[1] They had also for allies occasionally the Lord Fleming of Biggar and Cumbernauld, as is witnessed by a bond of man-rent between William Veitch and the Lord Fleming (22d November 1531).

This feud between Dawyck and Drummelzier culminated in 1590 in a very deliberate and cruel murder. William Veitch, "the Deil of Dawyck," had a son, Patrick. This lad was in Peebles on some sort of business on a day in June 1590. He had to return home in the afternoon, riding through the defile of the Tweed, where Neidpath Castle stands. The Tweedies were in the town of Peebles on the same day. Young Veitch was "perceived" there by James Tweedy of Drummelzier. The Tweedies were in force, there being no less than six of them, and with them two Crichtons and one Porteous (of Hawkshaw), their allies. They watched the youth on the road home, and made a plot to waylay him. One section of the party got in front of him behind Neidpath Castle, and the other section lurked on the road nearer Peebles. As soon as Veitch was enclosed between the two divisions, in the narrow defile by the river, they set on him, and in a most cowardly manner,—nine to one, as in the ballad of *The Dowie Dens*,—"with swords and pistolettes, cruellie and unmercifullie slew him, upon set purpose, auld feid, and forethought." The Tweedies were, wonderful to relate, actually put in prison in Edinburgh for the deed.

[1] He was born in 1710 and died in 1749. The work was published at Glasgow in 1748. The whole estates of the Geddeses were sold in 1752.

Then followed, as usual, an interminable process of citations and sureties to "satisfie pairties," of whom Scott of Buccleuch was one for the Tweedies. They had probably been helpful to him in their line. But the perpetrators of this atrocity were never brought to punishment by the law. Meanwhile the Veitches, probably anticipating the futile results of the law proceedings, took the matter into their own hand. Four days after the slaughter of Patrick Veitch — on the 20th June—John Tweedy, Tutor of Drummelzier, one of the band of the conspiring assassins, was walking on the High Street of Edinburgh. He was met by John Veitch, "apperand of North Syntoun"[1] (in Selkirkshire), and Andrew Veitch, brother of the Laird of Courhope, an estate and tower high up on the green slopes of the Harehope Hills. Some hot words passed about the fate of Patrick Veitch. The Veitch, younger of Syntoun, drew his sword, and then and there, after a sharp conflict, fatally cut down the Tutor of Drummelzier.[2] This gave rise of course to further recrimination in a series of charges and counter-charges.

The king had imagined that matters were made up; but it was not so. At his Court at Greenwich in 1611 he was disturbed by rumours of continued broils between these two families. He was old enough to remember people speak of the shuddering sensation which the news

[1] North Syntoun was given by Archibald, Earl of Douglas, surnamed the Tyneman, to Barnabas le Vache de Dawyk, styled "dilecto armigero nostro," in 1407. The master and the armour-bearer both fell—after having been together at Homildon and several other desperately fought fields—in the battle of Verneuil in 1424.

[2] Cf. Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials*, under date.

of another fatal hand-to-hand encounter between Dawyck and Drummelzier, arising out of the slaughter of Patrick Veitch, or perhaps from some earlier feud, had created at the Scottish Court, even in those times of atrocious deeds. On a morning in early summer the two lairds, according to the tradition, had met by chance on the haugh of the Tweed. Possibly from the tradition it was the old laird of Dawyck, the father of the murdered boy. They were alone when they confronted each other. The memories of centuries of mutual violence and mutual deeds of blood were quickened in their hearts, and that strange savage feeling of blood-atonement seemed to thrill in both. They agreed to settle the strife of centuries then and there. And tradition tells us that, as the birds waked the June morn, Drummelzier was found dead beside a bush by the river, and the blood had stained the white blossoms of the hawthorn-spray. Still the feud was carried on by son and son. And the king, in March 1611, in a proclamation, calls upon Lord Dunfermline and the other lords of the Privy Council to take steps to suppress this strife. The document is a curious one, and, as it has not been published before, I give it entire:—

"James R.,

"Right trustie and right weel-beloved Cousengills and Counsellors, We Greet you weel: whereas we understand, that the deadly Feid betwixt Veitches and Tweedies is as yet unreconciled, and our peace keept betwixt them only by the Means of Renewing of Assurances from Time to Time: But since we came so far, by great Pains in our Person, endureing our Stay there, and by Our continual Direction sensyne, suppressed that Monster within that Kingdom, so as wee do

hardly think that there be any One Feid except this in all that Kingdome unreconciled; and the Wrongs and Mischiefs done by either of them, as We understand, to others, being in such a Proportion of a Compensation as neither Party can either boast of advantage, or otherways think himself too much behind. THEREFORE, our Pleasure and Will is that you will call before you the Principalls of either Surname, and then take such Course for Removing of the Feid and Reconcileing, as you have been accustomed to do in the like cases. And whosoever shall Disobey your Command and Direction, you shall committ them prisoners, and certifie Us thereof, to the Effect we may return unto you Our further Pleasure and Will therein; and so We bid you fareweell:

"From our Court at Greenwich, the Tenth of March, 1611. To our right trustie and right weel-beloved cousins and counsellors, the Earle of Dunfermline, Lord Chancellor, and remanent Lords, and others of Our Privy Councill in Our Kingdom of Scotland."[1]

I do not know whether we should most sympathise with the "great pains in person" of the king, or most admire the quiet assumption of the moral principle of the fair balance of injuries, which the power of righteousness in the world, working through the centuries, had contrived to adjust between the combatants.

We may thus sum up the whole matter of Border story. The conditions of life on the Borders during all the mediæval period, and down to the Union of the Crowns, brought out what may be called individualism of character in an emphatic manner. The weakness or paralysis of the central government was constant through

[1] *Barns Family Papers.* The original is in possession of William Burnett, Esq., Haylodge, Peebles, the representative of the ancient family of Burnet of Barns, to whose kindness I am indebted for a copy of the paper.—(Note to first edition.) It is now the property of his family.

many generations. Each man had to trust for protection of life and property to himself,—to the strength of his own arm, and the sweep of his own sword. Even the system of clanship, which to some extent existed, was simply a combination of individuals under a head or chief to make the prowess of each man more available in his individual interest. No mistake can be greater historically than to judge of the deeds and the spirit of that old time by our modern standard—in other words, to look at the actions of individuals, or even combinations of individuals, at that date from the standpoint of a system of settled law and government, and a powerful and sure executive. There was no real protection for the individual in the central authority, so far as the Border country was concerned. When this authority was exercised to repress or punish crime —wounding, violence, even killing—it was done either in such a fitful and spasmodic way as for a time, it may be, to strike terror, but without inspiring continuous obedience, or its action was baffled by the power of a strong baron, who threw his shield over the offender. Hence the blood-feuds that subsisted through many generations, and hence also in a great measure the raids, the liftings, and the forays even in the Border land itself. Life, in a word, was to those Borderers of the olden time

> "A battle whose great scheme and scope
> They little cared to know,
> Content, as men-at-arms, to cope
> Each with his fronting foe."

And obviously, if there was need for the individual

relying on himself, even as against his neighbours, there was still greater need for his self-trust as against the national foes south of the Cheviots.

> "Our auld ennemys cummyn of Saxonys blud,
> That nevir yeit to Scotland wald do gud." [1]

This was the feeling of Blind Harry. It was the feeling of the Lowlander all through the centuries, until, happily, the blue line of the Cheviots ceased to be a national barrier,—that line which was

> "The rampart once
> Of Iron War in ancient barbarous times,
> When disunited Britain ever bled,
> Lost in eternal broil; ere yet she grew
> To this deep-laid, indissoluble State,
> Where Wealth and Commerce lift their golden heads;
> And o'er our labours Liberty and Law
> Impartial watch,—the wonder of a world."

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[1] *Wallace*, Buke Fyrst, p. i.

CHAPTER II.

THE POETRY OF THE BORDERS—THE OLDER POEMS DESCRIPTIVE OF SOCIAL MANNERS.

THE poetry of the Borders, subsequent to the Romantic epoch, has been inspired by the life and scenery of the district. It is a truly indigenous product, and consists in its earlier stage of Ballad and Song. This has taken its most artistic shape in the poetry of Scott, which grew directly out of the *Minstrelsy*. But, besides the Ballad and Song of the Borders, there are remains of an old form of poetic composition which deals not so much with action and emotion, as with the manners of the time—partly rustic, and partly ecclesiastical. This is a direct outcome of the district, as much as the Ballads; but it is not necessarily, as almost all these are, the production of men born and living in the district itself; for social manners are open to any casual and acute observer. Still, what remains of this class of pictorial and didactic compositions is well worthy of notice. We find in it a very instructive picture of the manners of the past, alike of rural life, of general society, and of the Church. The three poems still preserved for us of this class are, *Peblis to the Play*,

The Thrie Tailes of the Thrie Priests of Peebles, and *The Friars of Berwick*. These all represent an element which has been emphatically marked in the history of Scottish poetry—the humorous painting of social manners, through which there gleams a genial laughter, and often a shrewd common-sense that points both the moral and the remedy. *Peblis to the Play* is unquestionably a very old poem. It is a painting in the manner which Teniers afterwards illustrated — a picture of rustic life and festivities, of the humorous and grotesque incidents of a mediæval Feast-day in an old provincial town, the centre of a rural district. Something like the scene might indeed have been observed in the same locality well down in the present century. The "Play" was not, as Lord Hailes seems to imagine, the name for a stage-play; but indicated the sports and festivities which took place at Peebles annually on Beltane, the third, not the first of May, as is usually supposed. These had, in all probability, come in place of the ancient British practice of lighting fires on the hill-tops in honour of Baal, the Sun-god; hence the name *Baaltein, Beltane—i.e.*, Baal's fire. The Christian Church had so far modified the ceremonial as to substitute for the original idolatrous practice that of a day of rustic amusement. A fair or market, at the same period, which lasted for forty-eight hours, had also been instituted by royal charter. But even the practice of fire-lighting on the hill-tops was late in dying out. With the usual tenacity of custom, it survived for long all memory of its original meaning.

The authorship and the date of the poem have been dis-

puted. Unbroken tradition points to James I. (1423-24 to 1436-37) as the author; to whom, undoubtedly, we must ascribe *The Kingis Quair*.[1] *Peblis to the Play* has certainly none of the pathos, delicacy of touch, true feeling for nature, which *The Quair* plentifully exhibits. But these qualities were not to be expected from the nature of the subject. There is, however, a fine realism in the painting of scenes and manners, a rich humour and finished execution. We could not look for other qualities in such a poem. And it must have been composed by a man who was intimately acquainted with the localities, the language of the district, and with the modes of dress, manners, and pursuits of the people. It is written in a Tweedside dialect. We had until lately, indeed have now, many of the words of the poem employed in exactly the same sense as they bear in it. The author, too, was obviously a man of large kindliness and culture. He laughs at, yet enjoys heartily, the oddities of the scene. James I. fulfils all those requirements of authorship. During the thirteen years of his reign, in which the most accomplished of the Stewarts sought to civilise the savage and barbarous country to whose throne he had succeeded, his face was as familiar to the burgesses of Peebles, and in the valleys of the Tweed, the Manor, and the Meggat, as is the presence of Queen Victoria in Braemar and on Deeside. The district by the Tweed was the place of his sport and relaxation from that arduous task of government which he most dutifully assumed. He was an accomplished horseman, an excellent walker, a fleet runner. He handled bow and spear and sword with

[1] Quire, or little book.

wonderful dexterity.[1] Like his successors on the Scottish throne, down to the time of James VI., Meggatdale was for him a favourite hunting-field. That sport was to be got there in the olden time, we have proof in the fact that Mary on one occasion with a party killed 500 head of game. But she at last found the sport so poor, that she resolved not to go back again. Her father, with the Highland lords, killed, as we have seen, in the memorable spring of 1529-30, "aughtene score of deir." James I. was thus familiar with the district. The cloisters of the Cross Church, and the Castle of Peebles, or more probably Neidpath Castle, the seat of the sheriff of the shire, afforded him lodging for the time of his stay. In 1427 he gifted to his confessor the Hospital of St Leonard, on the Tweed, about two miles below Peebles; and when, in 1437, he was so foully murdered in Perth, the people of Peebles, cherishing a kindly memory of him, endowed a daily Mass for his soul in the Parish Church of St Andrew. All these circumstances connect him very closely with the locality, the people, and their manners. And we can readily conceive the gifted king, in the pleasant retrospect of a May day on the Tweed, sitting down to give effect to the impulse of picturing what he had seen and enjoyed at the Beltane Festival.

The title of James I. to the authorship of the poem has been sharply contested by Lord Hailes, Sibbald, and lately by Mr Skeat, and others, but, as appears to me, without much real force. Major seems almost certainly to allude to it in the oft-quoted paragraph in which he

[1] Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ii. 504.

speaks of the king's writings: "Composuit . . . jucundum artificiosumque illum cantum *At Beltayn*, etc., quem alii de Dalketh et Gargeil mutare studuerunt: quia in arce aut camera clausus servabatur, in qua mulier cum matre habitabat."[1]

Major, it should be observed, was born in 1469. He was alive in 1549, and died about 1550. He wrote his *History of Greater Britain* in 1518, eighty-one years after the death of the king.[2] He spent his life chiefly between Glasgow, St Andrews, and Paris, and was thus likely to be well informed in regard to such matters, and popular belief about them. The omission of any reference to James I. in Dunbar's *Lament for the Makars* has been set up as against the testimony of Major. But this, if it were of any force at all, would tell as much against the undoubted authorship of the *Kingis Quair* as of *Peblis to the Play*.

The natural meaning of this passage seems to be that James I. was the author of that pleasant and artistic poem *At Beltayn;* that some people had tried to change or improve upon it; and that the occasion or time of composition of the poem was while he was shut up in a tower in which a lady resided with her mother. This last clause indeed may mean that the reason why attempts were made to change or parody the poem was that the king was kept a prisoner in the castle where the

[1] Major, *De Gestis Scotorum*, f. cxxxv.: Paris, 1521. For the arguments against and for James's authorship, see Lord Hailes, *Observations on the Statutes of James I.;* Sibbald, *Chronicle of Scottish Poetry*, i. 137; Irving's *History of Scottish Poetry*, 151—Carlyle's edition; Skeat, *The Kingis Quair*, Int., xix.

[2] See *History of Greater Britain*, 212 note: ed. Constable.

lady dwelt with her mother. Mr Skeat, however, would regard Major's words as meaning that "James's poem was not to be got at, but was kept somewhere in safe custody; on which account others of Dalkeith and Gargeil endeavoured to write substitutes for it." This seems to be an extraordinary reading of the passage. It appears rather odd to suppose that it was the poem and not the king who was confined to the tower with the lady and her mother. We can understand a prince being so placed or guarded, but a piece of parchment would hardly be so circumstantially treated. Further, it is hardly consistent to suppose that the poem was thus kept secret, while it was describable by Major as pleasant and artistic, and capable also of being modified or imitated by apparent contemporaries. More than one imitation is said to have been made.

The objection that the poem contains no resemblance to the *Kingis Quair*, and that it is dissimilar in tone, vocabulary, and metre, is really of very little value. One surely could produce instances of gaiety of tone in a grave poet, and there is no need whatever that a poet treating a festive subject should write in the metre suited to one of another and higher type. As for the objection that "the rollicking metre" of the poem has no undoubted example before 1450, this might be met by the suggestion that we have it, perhaps, for the first time in *Peblis to the Play*. Some one, no doubt, set the example. Why not James I., with his admitted metrical and poetic capacity?

As to the vocabulary, and its difference from the diction and grammar of the *Kingis Quair*, this is met in a

measure by the fact pointed out by Mr Skeat himself, that James I. deliberately abandoned the Northern dialect and grammar which he knew, and imitated the Midland (or Southern) dialect of Chaucer all through the *Quair*, yet relapsing now and again into Northern forms. It was extremely unlikely that he would carry out this imitation in the case of a poem describing the rustic sports and manners of his country. He would naturally, almost necessarily, use the Northern tongue, that of himself and his countrymen. And so we find it. The language of *Peblis to the Play* is of the North Anglian dialect; and there are some of the forms of this dialect as it was before the latter half of the fifteenth century—as, for example, *quha* for *quhilk*, *thai*, and *is* slurred in the plural. On the other hand, we have the old forms *ga* and *sua*, the present participle in *and*—*suietand*, *settand*, as in the Act of Parliament 1397,—and the very old forms of *Hop-Calzé* for *Kailzie*, and *Cardronow* for *Cardrona*. But there is hardly ground for linguistic considerations in the matter. The date of authorship in this case cannot be conclusively decided by reference to the language, for the reason that we have no manuscripts except such as were transcribed long subsequently to the supposed period of composition. One great test-word of the date of Scottish literature is the article *a*, *an*, *ane*. Before 1475, *an* or *ane* was very rarely used before a consonant. After that date, at least after the year 1500, it was almost universally so employed. This was a revival of the old Anglo-Saxon; but it was due directly to imitation of the French *un* and *une*. In *Peblis to the Play* the latter usage certainly prevails. This would seem to bring the poem

down to at least the time of James III., or even James IV. But this circumstance ceases to have force when we consider that we have no MS. of the poem earlier than the latter part of the sixteenth century, and that we have no warrant for holding a MS. of this date to be the original. We thus cannot tell what amount of change in orthography may have been introduced by transcribers.[1]

But the test of the article, so far as it is capable of being applied, rather tells in favour of the antiquity of *Peblis to the Play*. For this poem is mentioned in *Christis Kirk on the Grene*, also attributed to James I., though some writers hold it to be a production of James V. We may thus infer that *Peblis to the Play* is the older production of the two. The passage in *Christis Kirk on the Grene* is as follows :—

> "Was nevir in Scotland hard nor seen
> Sic dancing nor deray,[2]
> Nouthir at Falkland on the grene,
> Nor Peblis at the Play ;
> As wes of wowaris,[3] as I wene,
> At Christis Kirk on a day :
> Thair came our kitties[4] weschin clene,
> In thair new kirtillis[5] of gray,
> Full gay,
> At Christis Kirk of the grene that day."

Now, if we suppose that the reference here is to the poem, and not merely to the festival, an important conclusion follows. For we find that in *Christis Kirk on the Grene* the use of the article *a* before a consonant is

[1] See Murray, *Dialects of Southern Counties*, 56.
[2] Revelry. [3] Wooers. [4] Country lasses. [5] Gowns.

almost uniform. This leads us to suppose that it is a production before the year 1500, and not at all of the time of James V.; for, while it is possible that the later usage of the article, the *an* or *ane* before a consonant, might have been introduced into an early manuscript by subsequent transcribers when the usage had grown up, it is highly improbable that the earlier usage, contrary to the habit of the time, would have been inserted into a later manuscript. Both the poems, therefore, may be regarded as productions of the fifteenth century. And if we consider the similarity of the stanza of the two poems, in itself of rare structure, the analogous nature of the subject, the similar qualities of quiet observation and kindly humour which they display, the power, too, in each, of vivid picturing almost by a single epithet, we shall not be far wrong in referring them to the same authorship. And in that fifteenth century there is no man more likely to have written them than the author of *The Kingis Quair*.

The opening stanza of *Peblis to the Play* indicates the time and circumstance of the poem, and the merry ring of the verse gives the key-note of the poem—a certain outrageously joyous holiday feeling, the intenser for its rarity — and this is sustained with wonderful art all through the poem:—

"At Beltane,[1] when ilk[2] bodie bownis[3]
To Peblis to the Play,
To heir the singin and the soundis,[4]
The solace, suth to say;

[1] Beltane, 3d May. [2] Every. [3] Makes ready to go. [4] Better *sounis*.

Be firth[1] and forest furth they found,[2]
They graythit[3] tham full gay;
God wait[4] that wald they do that stound,[5]
For it was their Feist Day,
They said,
Of Peblis to the Play.

All the wenchis of the west
War up or the cok crew;
For reiling[6] thair micht na man rest,
For garray[7] and for glew;[8]
Ane said my curches[9] ar nocht prest;
Than answerit Meg full blew,[10]
To get an hude[11] I hald it best;
Be Goddis saull that is true,
Quod scho
Of Peblis to the Play.

She tuik the tippet be the end,
To lat it hing scho leit[12] not;
Quod ane, thy bak sall beir ane bend;
In faith, quod she, we meit[13] not.
Scho was so guckit[14] and so gend,[15]
That day ane byt[16] scho eit nocht;
Than spak hir fallowis that hir kend,
'Be still, my joy, and greit not
Now,
Of Peblis to the Play.'

. . . . . .

Hop-Cailyé, and Cardronow[17]
Gaderit[18] out thik-fald,[19]

---

[1] Enclosed wood or place.
[2] Issue, or go forth; A.S. *fundian*, to go.
[3] Dressed.
[4] Knew.
[5] Time; German *stunde*.
[6] Bustle.
[7] Haste of preparation.
[8] Mirth.
[9] Kerchiefs.
[10] Blue.
[11] Hood.
[12] Let, allowed.
[13] Mate.
[14] Light, or foolish, also *gauckit*.
[15] Playful.
[16] Bite.
[17] These are places on the Tweed just below Peebles, now Kailzie and Cardrona. This line is most incorrectly printed by some editors, as: "Hope, Calzè, and Cardronow," as if three places were designated; whereas there are but two—viz., Hop-Cailzie, or Kailzie, and Cardrona.
[18] Gathered.
[19] Manifold.

With *Hey and How Rohumbelow;*
The young folks were full bald.[1]
The bagpyp blew, and thai out threw
Out of the townis[2] untald.
Lord sic ane schout was thame amang,
Quhen thai were our the wald[3]
Thair west,
Of Peblis to the Play.

. . . . . .

Ane young man stert in-to that steid
Als cant as ony colt,
Ane birken hat upon his heid,
With ane bow and ane bolt;
Said, mirrie maidinis, think not lang;
The wedder is fair and smolt.
He cleikit up ane hie ruf sang,
'*Thar fure ane man to the holt,*'
Quod he,
Of Peblis to the Play.

. . . . . .

Than thai come to the townis end
Withouttin more delai,
He befoir, and scho[4] befoir,
To see quha was maist gay.
All that lukit thame upon
Leuche[5] fast at thair array:
Sum said that thai were mercat[6] folk;
Sum said the Quene of May
Was cumit,
Of Peblis to the Play.

. . . . . .

Be that the sone was settand fast,[7]
And neir done was the day:
Thair men micht heir schakin of chaftis
Quhen that thai went thair way.
Had thair been mair made of this sang,
Mair suld I to you say.
At Beltane ilka bodie bownd
To Peblis to the Play."

---

[1] Bold. [2] Farmsteads and towers. [3] Plain, or ground.
[4] She. [5] Laughed. [6] Market. [7] Other reading, *schaftis.*

The other stanzas contain some very rough, yet humorous scenes and pictures.[1]

The Thrie Tailes of the Thrie Priests of Peebles seems to be referred to in *The Complaynt of Scotland.* The production may thus be taken as earlier than 1549, or even 1547: "The Priest of Peblis speris ane questione in ane beuk that he conpilit, why that burges ayris thryuis nocht to the thrid ayr: bot he mycht hef sperit as weil, quhy that the successours of the universal comont pepil baytht to burght and land, thryuis nocht to the thrid ayr."[2] This is not quite an accurate description of the poem; for it does not profess to be compiled by a priest of Peebles, but is a series of *Tailes* supposed to be made by three priests who met there on St Bride's day. It is possible, however, that the reference here is to the author, who was probably well enough known at the time of the composition of the *Complaynt* —who might in truth, from the terms employed, have been living at that period. From the allusions in the poem, Sibbald refers it to the last years of the reign of James V., who died in 1542. The somewhat dissolute character of the king, the low state of the character of the nobility, and the abuse of ecclesiastical patronage, are, as he points out, emphatically censured. But the force of this is not great. The very same personal and social irregularities might have been censured in the times of James IV., or even of James III.

Pinkerton, on the other hand, is inclined to regard the poem, from an allusion it contains, as earlier than 1491.

[1] For the whole, see Sibbald, i. 121.

[2] *The Complaynt of Scotland,* c. xvi. 143 (Murray's edition).

The first of the priests—John, "that master was in arte," hence called Maister John—is represented as a great traveller. Maister Archibald, the second priest, suggests:—

> "The first tail tauld mot[1] be Maister Johne:
> For he hath bene in monie uncouth[2] land,
> In Portingale, and in Civile the Grand;
> In five Kynrikis[3] of Spane als hes he been;
> In foure Christin and ane Heathin I wene.
> In Rome, Flanders, and in Venice town,
> And other landis sindrie up and down."

The reference here to the one heathen kingdom of Spain is that of Granada, which was so until 1491. The poem was therefore written either before that date—probably in the reign of James III., 1460-1488—or subsequently, but in the lifetime of a man who had been in Spain before Granada was christianised. The other supposition, that the author was ignorant of the spread of Christianity over the whole of Spain, can hardly be entertained.

Pinkerton's view is supported by the fact pointed out by Dr David Laing, that a portion of the tales, with the title, is found in a MS. which appears to have been transcribed twenty years before the date assigned to the poem by Sibbald. We have almost no data for determining the authorship. Pinkerton ascribes the poem to Dean David Steill, the author of *The Ring of the Roy Robert*, in the Maitland MS. Sibbald, with his theory of its later composition, regards John Rolland as the author. The *Tailes* were first printed, and very incorrectly, in 1603, by Robert Charteris. They were reprinted by

[1] Must. [2] Foreign, strange. [3] Kingdoms.

Pinkerton in 1792, in part by Sibbald in 1801, and by David Laing in his *Early Metrical Tales,* Edinburgh, 1826.

The "Thrie Priests" met together on the 1st February —St Bride's day—in Peebles, and, while enjoying their "collation," each of them in turn tells a story or *taile.* The opening lines present a curious picture of quiet enjoyment:—

"In Peebles toun sometime, as I heard tell,
The foremost day of Februar, befel,
Thrie priestis went unto collation,
Into ane privy place of the said toun,
Where that they sat right soft and unfoot sair;
They lovit not nae rangald[1] nor repair.[2]
And, gif I sall the sooth reckin and say,
I traist it was upon Saint Brydis day;
Where that they sat, full easily and soft;
With many loud laughter upon loft.
And, wit ye well, thir thrie they made good cheir;
To them there was nae dainties then too deir,
With thrie fed caponis on a speet with creis,
With mony other sundry divers meis.
And them to serve they had not but a boy;
Frae company they keepit them sae coy;
They lovit not with ladry[3] nor with lown,[4]
Nor with trumpours[5] to travel through the toun;
Bot with themself what they would tell or crack;
Umquhile[6] sadly, umquhile jangle and jack;[7]
Thus sat thir thrie beside ane felloun[8] fire,
Till their caponis were roistit lim and lyre[9]."

The plan of the first of the *Tailes* is to suppose that the king proposes to each of the Three Estates in Parliament assembled certain questions. To the Burgesses

[1] Crowd, rabble. [2] Concourse. [3] Common people.
[4] Low fellows. [5] Stragglers. [6] Sometimes.
[7] Prattle and idle the time. [8] Fierce, strong.
[9] Fleshy parts.

or Commons he proposes, in Maister Johne's tale, the question—

> "Quhy burges bairns thryvis not to the thrid air,
> But casts away it that their eldars wan?"

The answer is:—

> "They begin not where their fathers began,
> Bot, with ane heily[1] hart, baith doft[2] and derft,
> Thay ay begin quhair that their fathers left."

The steps in the progress of a successful merchant of the time are very graphically sketched:—

> "Becaus their fatheris purelie can begin,
> With hap, and halfpenny, and a lamb's skin,
> And purelie rin frae toun to toun on feit,
> And then richt oft wetshod, werie, and weit;
> Quhill at the last, of monie smals, couth mak
> This bonnie pedder[3] ane gude fute pak,
> At ilkane[4] fair this chapman ay was fund;
> Quhill that his pak was worth fourtie pund.
> To beir his pak, when that he faillit force,
> He bocht ful sone ane mekill stalwart horse;
> And at the last so worthelie up wan,
> He bocht ane cart to carie pot and pan;
> Baith Flanders coffers, with counteris and kist;[5]
> He waxe ane grande riche man or onie wist.
> And syne into the toun, to sel and by,
> He held a shop to sel his chaffery,[6]
> Then bocht he wol,[7] wyselie couth it wey;
> And after that sone sailit he the sey,
> Then come he hame a very potent man;
> And spousit syne a michtie wyfe richt than.
> He sailit our the sey sae oft and oft,
> Quhill at the last ane semelie ship he coft,[8]
> And waxe sae ful of worldis welth and win,[9]
> His hands he wish in ane silver basin.

[1] Proud. [2] Foolish and reckless. [3] Pedlar.
[4] Every. [5] Chest. [6] Merchandise.
[7] Wool. [8] Bought. [9] Gain.

Forouten[1] gold or silver into hoard,
Worth three thousand pound was his copburde,[2]
Riche was his gounis with other garments gay,
For Sonday silk, for ilk day[3] grene and gray."[4]

To the Lords he proposes the question :—

"Quhairfor, and quhy, and quhat is the cais,
Sa worthi lordis war in myne elders days,
Sa full of fredome, worship, and honour,
Hardie in hart to stand in everie stour,
And now in you I find the haill contrair?"

The answer is, that justice is badly administered in the country, the husbandmen and tenants of the Lords oppressed, and thus the Lords themselves impoverished, and led to disparage their character and honour by low alliances for the sake of money. To the Clergy and Bishops he proposes the question :—

"Quhairfor and quhy
In auld times and dayis of ancestry,
Sa monie bishops war, and men of kirk,
Sa grit wil had ay gude werkes to wirk;
And throw their prayers, maid to God of micht,
The dum men spak; the blind men gat their sicht;
The deif men heiring; the cruikit gat their feit.
Was nane in bail[5] but weil they culd them beit.[6]
And quhairfor now in your time ye varie,
As thay did then quhairfor sa may not ye?"

In other words—Why have miracles and good deeds ceased in the Church? The answer is as follows :—

[1] Not reckoning.

[2] Cupboard, an important article of furnishing in old Scottish houses, in which plate and other articles of ornament and value were displayed.

[3] Every day, lawful day.

[4] Sibbald, ii. 233, 234.

[5] Fire, trouble.

[6] Help.

"The bishop cums in at the north-window;
And not at the dur, nor yit at the yet;[1]
But over waine and quheil[2] in wil he get.
Gif he cummis not in at the dur,
Goddis pleuch may never hald the fur,[3]
How should he kyth[4] mirakil, and he sa evil?
Never bot by the dysmel,[5] or the devil.
For, now on dayes, is nouther riche nor pure
Sal get ane kirk, all throw his literature.
For science, for vertew, or for blude,
Gets nane the kirk, bot baith for gold and gude."

The second tale refers to the heedlessness of the king in frequently changing his servants, and the consequent temptation to avarice. The third tale is allegorical, and refers to Death as the messenger of God. What a man loves better than himself—money—refuses to accompany him. What he loves as well as himself—wife and relations—these agree to go with him as far as the port or grave. What he loves less than these, and has very imperfectly served—viz., almsgiving or charity—is the only friend who is willing to accompany him into the presence of the mighty King of all, who now asks from him an account of the deeds of his life.

The *Tailes* are very good specimens of what was for many centuries the staple of Scottish poetry—viz., the picture of habits and manners, in private life, in the Church, in the Courts of Justice, and at the Royal Court. They are highly moral and didactic in tone, patriotic and boldly critical, suggesting remedies for crying evils. The versification, the ten-syllable rhyming couplet, is remarkably smooth; and the treatment and finish show very considerable artistic power.

[1] Gate. [2] Waggon and wheel. [3] Furrow.
[4] Show. [5] Perhaps necromancy.

The Friars of Berwick is a tale very much in the manner of Chaucer, and it is not unworthy of his style. It satirises the vices of the regular clergy in a way that must have come home to the sense of domestic purity of the people. It is evidently a production of the pre-Reformation period, and, like the writings of Sir David Lyndsay, must have contributed in some measure to the ecclesiastical revolution of 1560. It is not a product peculiar to the Border district. It only shows that the Church and the practices of its representatives were the same south of the Forth as in Fife and the north-eastern counties which Lyndsay knew and portrayed.

The picture of the town of Berwick, as it was ere the destruction of the castle and the dissolution of the monastic orders in 1539, is graphic and pleasing:—

"As it befell, and hapinit into deid,
Upon ane rever, the quhilk is callit Tweid;
At Tweidis mouth thair stands ane noble toun,
Quhair mony lordis hes bene of grit renoune,
And mony a lady bene fair of face,
And mony ane fresche lusty galand was.
Into this toun, the quhilk is callit Berwik,
Apoun the sey, thair standis nane it lyk,
For it is wallit weill about with stane,
And dowbil stankis[1] castin mony ane.
And syne the castell is so strang and wicht,
With staitelie towrs and turrets hé on hicht,
With kirnalis[2] wrocht craftelie with all;
The portcullis most subtellie to fall,
Quhen that thame list to draw thame upon hicht,
That it may be into na mannis micht,
To win that hous by craft or subtiltie.
Quhairfoir it is maist fair alluterrlie;[3]

[1] Deep ditches with standing water. [2] Battlements. [3] Wholly.

Into my tyme, quhairever I have bein,
Most fair, most gudelie, most plesand to be sene.
The toun, the castle, and the plesand land ;
The sea wallis [1] upon the other hand ;
The grit Croce Kirk, and eik the Mason dew ; [2]
The Jacobin of the quhytè hew,
The Carmeletis and the monks eik
Of the four ordours war nocht to seik ;
They wer all into this toun dwelling."

The heart of the mediæval artist is in this picture. The land, river, and sea have but scant notice ; but there is the strong feeling of the skilled, resolute work of the human hand—of its order, strength, and grace. Man in the mediæval time was struggling with hard nature, and fierce foes of his own kind. And any triumph over these in the form of personal defence, self-concentration, outflanking structure of wall and tower, was to the imagination of the time the highest object of interest and the finest subject of poetic art.

[1] Waves. *Wally se*, wavy sea, in G. Douglas. [2] Maison Dieu.

CHAPTER III.

THE BALLADS AND SONGS OF THE BORDER.

The Border land of Scotland—that district of hill and valley through which flow the streams of the Liddel, the Teviot, the Ettrick, the Yarrow, and the Tweed—thus nursed in far back times of Scottish history, down to the Union of the Crowns, a people remarkable for personal courage and warlike spirit, for a proud feeling of independence, a stern strong individualism of character. Withal, they had hearts capable of being finely stirred by song—warmed to enthusiasm by the simple tale of local prowess; again touched to softness by the love strain, or by the story of widowed grief; again awed by glimpses of that weird and supersensible world which their fancies and their fears created for them, and which they believed lay bordering so near this world of common life and everyday experience, that at any moment it might flash on them in the form of fairy pageant in the green glen, or weird wraith on the moor, or water-spirit mingling its wail with the sough of the flood. This Border land has been for long one of the great founts of Scottish poetry,—and of a form of poetry which possesses features so characteristic that

no one who has an ear for the melody of the human soul can mistake its genuine, its native tones. Those features are simplicity of diction, picturesqueness of narrative, a truthful and simple realism, with deep feeling, and the complete subordination of the poet to his subject or theme.

The Ballad and Song of the Border land have taken their rise, character, and colouring almost entirely from local circumstances. Nothing can be less indebted to inspiration outside of the district itself than these ballads. They have been a pure growth of the soil. Border men did the deeds which Border minstrels sung; and Border maidens and widows felt the love and the sorrow which the poet glorified. The fresh air of old Border life and romance is upon these songs; and now each man born into the district may share in the golden heritage of its poetry, which seems to have grown up among the people as freely and naturally as the birks by the burn-sides, or the heather-bloom on the hills.

The special circumstances already noted in our historical sketches bore directly on the formation and character of the ballads. The position of the district, as lying between the centre of Scotland and the Borders of England—two hostile countries—made life in it for long restless and unquiet, left property open to constant danger of being driven or carried away. The men in the district were hence kept perpetually disciplined to arms for self-defence, or for aggression. And thus were nourished in them the stern virtues of courage, self-reliance, hardihood, and independence.

The weakness of central government and law, which

was unable to protect the Borderers either from the English or from each other, led, as we have seen, to the formation and subsistence of clanship among them—a relation nearly as strict on the Borders as in the Highlands of Scotland. This created the feeling of personal attachment to a chief. There was a good deal of roughness and coarseness in their life, a good deal of plain speaking, as in their ballads; but their circumstances afforded the fullest scope for individualism of character, for personal courage and prowess, endurance and daring, skill of fight and fence, not unmixed with a fine spirit of chivalry and a high sense of honour. It was not much of a peaceful or comfortable time: one clan or family was quite ready to burn the tower or "lift" the cattle of its neighbour; but even their thieving had at least the virtue of openness. It was a habit of mutual reprisals or violent exchange. As old Satchells says:—

"A freebooter is a cavalier who risks his life for gain."

They certainly risked their lives in the act; and they contrast favourably with some people in our own times, who safely and respectably rob by schemes of bubble companies, or cheat by means of adulterated goods, or send rotten ships to sea.

Out of those circumstances rose the Historical Ballads of the district—that is, the poems that narrate Border exploits, either of a national or a personal kind, against the English on the other side, or of raids and forays of one clan upon another in the Border district itself. These simple rhythmical narratives are among the oldest compositions of the district. The subjects of them, the ex-

ploits of the chiefs of the clans and their vassals, were naturally the things that excited most interest in the country-side. And the minstrel or bard celebrated these long before he had any feeling for natural scenery as an object of poetic description; or even before he cared to sing of love, or tenderness, or pity. Accordingly, we may place as among the earliest compositions the historical ballads, such as *Auld Maitland*, *Battle of Otterbourne*, *The Song of the Outlaw Murray*, *Johnnie Armstrong*, *Jamie Telfer of the Fair Dodhead*, and so on.

As far back in time as the historical ballads, and indeed in some cases before them, I am inclined to place that class of ballads which relates to the supersensible, especially to the world of Fairyland, to beliefs about unseen powers and their influence on human life, such as *Thomas the Rhymour's Ride to Fairyland*, *Young Tamlane*, and others. For, alongside an interest in the exploits of the men among them, the heart of the people was, from an early period, strongly influenced by beliefs and fancies regarding the unseen. These beliefs were not probably engendered in the Border district. The Borderer held them in common with the northern and Teutonic nations. But the shapes which the beliefs took were due to local circumstances.

The third class of ballads is that which refers to some tragic or pathetic incident in the life of a person or in a district, in which are mixed up the emotions of love, sorrow, tenderness, pity. Of this class we have examples chiefly in those of the Yarrow, *The Douglas Tragedy*, *The Dowie Dens*, and so on; and in the matchless wail of *The Flowers of the Forest.*

Then we have the fourth class, that particularly of Songs rather than ballads, in which the poet seeks not to narrate chiefly, or even at all, but to give expression to the master emotion of successful or unsuccessful love, such as Lord Yester's *Tweedside, John Hay's Bonnie Lassie,* and Robert Crawford's *Bush aboon Traquair.*

Sir Walter Scott in the *Minstrelsy* has classed, or rather thrown together, a great many ballads and songs under the head of "Romantic." Among these are some founded on Fairy inspiration—such as *Tamlane;* some on witchcraft and magical enchantment—as *Kempion;* some properly historical; and, finally, others still that represent strong emotions of love and grief. A classification of this sort is obviously of no real meaning or critical importance. The central notion of romance seems to be the conception that the laws of nature and natural powers are subject to the control of supernatural agencies, or of persons to whom those agencies communicate their powers. There is, in fact, supposed to be a fusion of the material and the spiritual, the former presenting no form of difficulty which the latter cannot overcome. Very few of the ballads, however, in Scott's classification fulfil this condition. His own *Eve of St John* and Leyden's *Cout of Keeldar* might fairly come under this description; and, abroad, Bürger, Goethe, and Uhland furnish appropriate modern examples. But surely it was out of place to class with these ballads, or with the productions of the German school of last century, *The Douglas Tragedy* and *The Border Widow's Lament.*

Romance, in this, its primary and essential form, is an

expression of the conviction that mere naturalism or materialism—the world as it exists for the senses—is not the whole of things, not all which men should rest in or accept; but that somehow there is a transcendent sphere of power and being, which lives in the world, shows itself there, is yet above it and capable of moving on through all time, and every variety of sensible phenomena. Romance postulates an extravagance and an extraordinariness in the manifestations of this power, because it supposes that the ordinary movements of the physical world are independent, and do not show supernatural agency as the marvellous does. This is the mere mistake of irreflection; but it is well that, however imperfectly located may be the transcendent and eternal power, there is at least some form of its recognition—a consciousness of its nearness and pervading character.

The secondary yet related meaning of romance seems to be that tendency of individualism in character, which leads to action and situation, not comprised within the limits of conventional rule, and which is novel and striking, as if the person were actuated by some new ideal of life or things. The romantic thus may or may not be a violation of law; that, at least, is not in the actor's thoughts. It comprises, in fact, every form of individualism which asserts itself without regard to the usual course of conduct observed, or tradition accepted in the circumstances, and yet is in itself earnest and true to its conviction of what is noblest and best. But, whatever view we adopt of the nature of romance, there can be no doubt that, as it appears in the older ballads, it is mainly an inspiration from the Arthurian period—a traditional

inheritance, without consciousness of it, from that epoch. And the ballads which express it are of the older type. They lead us back to the early fountains of European romance, as the Fairy ballads do to Scandinavian mythology.

I do not here profess to give more than a general and convenient classification of those ballads and songs. The truth is, there is no principle of division among them which, if rigidly laid down, would not at once be crossed. The supernatural and historical elements are constantly blended; the mythic and legendary are mixed with both; and the romantic, while appearing here and there distinctly, is really in one or other of its forms all through the older Border poetry. I refer to different ballads as under those various heads, because there may be found in them the one of those elements more distinctly marked than the other. This fusion of various features, natural to the circumstances and the feelings of the writers, forms the charm of the often inartistic verses. All these elements, moreover, seem equally real to the minstrel. The Fairy world, the power of the magician and wizard, the return from the dead, are spoken of with the same sense of reality as the hand-to-hand encounter in a deadly raid. The legend of the past is treated as the fact of the present. The romantic in feeling and deed is the natural. It is this blending of ideal and real which softens the otherwise hard and repulsive features of the old Border life. The fearless daring and stern courage of the moss-trooper would stand out unrelieved in its savage severity, were he not felt at the same time to be under the power of an awe and dread from the supersensible;

and were not the narrative of the cruellest deed now and again softened by a gleam of pity and of pathos, as the sudden and passing glimpse of sunlight tenderly illumines the rough grey crag of the Border hills. Hogg touched all the elements of Border poetry when he sung in *The Wake*:—

"Each glen was sought for tales of old,
Of luckless love, of warrior bold,
Of ravished maid, or stolen child,
By freakish fairy of the wild;
Of sheeted ghost, that had revealed
Dark deeds of guilt, from man concealed;
Of boding dreams, of wandering sprite,
Of dead lights glimmering through the night;
Yes, every tale of ruth or weir,
Could waken pity, love, or fear,
Were decked anew, with anxious pain,
And sung to native airs again."

Of the authors of the older ballads and songs of the Borders we know little or nothing. One tradition of authorship there is. Once the Flower of Yarrow—the Mary Scott who married Harden—was watching the return of her husband from a Border foray; her ear caught the wail of a child among the spoils which Harden had carried home. The mother's heart was touched; she took the child, and reared it, and it is said of him:—

"Of milder mood the gentle captive grew,
Nor loved the scenes that scared his infant view.
In vales remote from camps and castles far,
He shunn'd the fearful shudd'ring joy of war;
Content the loves of simple swains to sing,
Or wake to fame the harp's heroic string.
His are the strains, whose wandering echoes thrill
The shepherd lingering on the twilight hill,

When evening brings the merry folding hours,
And sun-eyed daisies close their winking flowers.
He lived o'er Yarrow's Flower to shed the tear,
To strew the holly's leaves o'er Harden's bier;
But none was found, above the minstrel's tomb,
Emblem of peace, to bid the daisy bloom:
He, nameless as the race from which he sprung,
Saved other names, and left his own unsung."

James Hogg, as well as Leyden, has referred touchingly to the oblivion which covers the names of the bards of the Tweed and Yarrow:—

"Woe that the bard, whose thrilling song
Has pour'd from age to age along,
Should perish from the lists of fame,
And lose his only boon—a name!
Yet many a song of wondrous power,
Well known in cot and greenwood bower,
Wherever swells the shepherd's reed,
On Yarrow's banks and braes of Tweed;
Yes, many a song of olden time,
Of rude array, and air sublime,
Though long on time's dark whirlpool toss'd,
The song is saved, the bard is lost.

Yet have I ween'd, when these I sung
On Ettrick banks, while mind was young;
When on the eve their strains I threw,
And youths and maidens round me drew;
Or chanted in the lonely glen,
Far from the haunts and eyes of men;
Yes, I have ween'd, with fondest sigh,
The spirit of the bard was nigh;
Swung by the breeze on bracken pile,
Or hovering o'er me with a smile,
Would Fancy still her dreams combine,
That spirit too might breathe on mine;
Well pleased to see her songs the joy
Of that poor lonely shepherd boy."[1]

[1] *Wake, Second Bard's Song.*

There can be no doubt, however, that the habit of celebrating exploits in ballads and of giving expression to emotion in song was common on the Border of Scotland in very early times. Barbour excuses himself for giving the particulars of a Border exploit, a victory gained by Schyr Johne the Soullis over Schyr Andrew Hardclay, for the reason that one may hear these any day sung by young women at play.[1] His words are :—

> "I will nocht rehers the maner,
> For wha sa likes thai may her
> Young wemen quhen thai will play,
> Syng it amang thaim ilk day."

There can be little doubt that the *Bruce* of Barbour and the *Wallace* of Blind Harry are both greatly indebted to songs and ballads existing before their time; that both minstrels made use of them in their works; and that thus the earlier compositions disappeared. As with Homer in this respect, there were pre-existing poems waiting to be fitted into the national epic.

The *Complaynt of Scotland* with its list of songs and ballads is emphatic as to the number of floating ballads; and Lesley bears testimony to the same fact. What has come down to us of song, ballad, and tune may, probably does, in some respects, represent the older minstrelsy; but we have not precisely the oldest set of words or forms. There is, however, at least the continuity of inspiration, and in several cases the old airs have survived the loss of the original words, as in the case of *The Flowers of the Forest* and *Braw Braw Lads of Gala Water*. The old

[1] Cf. Motherwell, *Minstrelsy*, Introduction, xlviii.

tunes haunting the ear of the more modern minstrel have become the sources of new and inspiring songs.

Some doubts have been raised regarding the genuineness and authenticity of certain of the Border and other ballads of Scotland. This has been done chiefly by the late Dr Robert Chambers.[1] His view is that a considerable number of those ballads were really written by one person, in imitation of the antique; and he attributes these to Lady Wardlaw of Pitreavie (1677–1727). This lady was, as is now fully acknowledged, the authoress of *Hardyknute*. Dr Chambers regards as her composition, among others, the following Scottish historical ballads—viz., *Sir Patrick Spens, Gil Morice, Edward! Edward! Gilderoy, Young Waters, Edom o' Gordon,* and *Bonnie Earl of Moray*. He founds chiefly on similarities in phrases and lines,—not a very powerful argument in regard to poems, which, if antique, must have come down in popular memory and recitation. And if we look closely to the internal evidence afforded by Lady Wardlaw's acknowledged composition, *Hardyknute*, and those other ballads now mentioned, we shall find very marked differences in spirit, style, simplicity, and distinctness of imagery, so as to make it highly improbable that *Sir Patrick Spens*, or *Gil Morice*, or *Edom o' Gordon* could have come from the same hand as *Hardyknute*. The telling part, however, against the hypothesis is that *Gil Morice* and *Edom o' Gordon* are to be found in the Percy MS., written in all probability about 1650, by a native of Lancashire or Cheshire. This was twenty-seven years before Elizabeth Halket of Pitfirrane, afterwards Lady Wardlaw, was

[1] See *The Romantic Scottish Ballads*, by R. Chambers (1859).

born. Another point is that while we have not more, as a rule, than one version of the modern imitation or forgery of the antique, we have almost always several, even differing, versions of the really old ballads.[1] It is utterly improbable that these varying versions, to be found often in the south, west, and north of Scotland, could have arisen from a ballad produced in the middle of last century, or at any period nearly approaching it.

William Dunbar — the illustrious author of *The Thistle and Rose* and *The Golden Terge*—who, along with Gawain Douglas, adorned the reign of James IV. (1488-1513), and who lived from 1455 to about 1520, wrote in his old age a *Lament for the Makars* (Poets). The *Lament* has a saddened tone about it. We seem to see, as Lord Hailes says, "the once gay Dunbar, now advanced in years, deprived of his joyous companions, and probably jostled out of court by other wits, younger and more fashionable than he. He mentions the names and mourns the death of no less than twenty-three Scottish poets; of about twelve of whom not a single memorial now remains, or, at least, is known." Among the *makars* whose death Dunbar laments are the following:—

"The gude Sir Hew of Eglintoun,
Ettriik, Heryot and Wintoun,
He hes tane out of this cuntrie.
Timor Mortis conturbat me.

[1] The view of Chambers has deservedly met with little or no acceptance. See, on this point, Norval Clyne, *Romantic Scottish Ballads* (1859), and Wheatley, *Percy's Reliques*, Introduction.

That skorpioun fell hes done infek[1]
Maister Johne Clerk, and James Afflek,
Frae ballat making and trigedie.

Holland and Barbour he has berevit;
Allace! that he nocht with us levit
Schir Mungo Lokart of the Lie.

Clerk of Tranent eik he has tane,
That maid the Aenteris of Gawane;
Schir Gilbert Hay endit hes he.

. . . . . .

And he has now tane last of aw,
Gud gentil Stobo, and Quintene Schaw,
Of quhome all wightis hes pitie." [2]

Dr David Laing supposed that Ettriik was a misreading for "Et eik"—that is, "and also." This would mean simply, "and also Heriot," and thus Ettriik as a separate poet would disappear. But Dr Schipper, in his most careful and able edition of Dunbar, gives good reasons for supposing that "Ettriik" was really the original reading.[3] His conjecture, however, that Ettriik is an adjective, and refers to Heryot of Ettrick, is improbable. The poets are obviously named from their localities, as was usual in the old times for both poets and lairds; and Heryot and Ettriik are well known as wholly different localities. That we do not know anything more about Ettriik is no conclusive proof whatever that he did not exist; and we know just as much or as little of some of the others mentioned by Dunbar. Sir Mungo Lockhart of the Lee points to Lanarkshire. He is mentioned as being dead in 1487.

[1] Probably made feckless, either incapable or dead.
[2] Sibbald, i. 209 and 325.
[3] *The Poems of William Dunbar*, 287, 288. Cf. Schipper's edition, 285.

Others are named — as Blind Harry, Sandy Traill, Patrick Johnston, Mersar, Rowll of Aberdeen, Rowll of Corstorphine, Broun and Henryson of Dunfermline, Schir Johne the Ross. "Ettriik," "Heryot," and "Stobo" point probably either to the places of birth of the poets or their acquired residences. Designations thus originating were very common at the time. Heriot lies up in the vale of the Gala Water, and Stobo is on the Tweed in Peeblesshire. We have very clear details about the person known as "Stobo." This was another name for Sir John Reid, a churchman and notary, clerk in the secretary's office, in the reign of James III. On the 29th March 1474 the king granted a pension of £20 a-year to "Johne Reid, *alias* Stobo," in consideration of his services as foreign secretary to the king's father and himself. Special reference is made to letters written by Reid to the Pope, and to divers foreign kings and princes. The last payment of his pension is in 1504-5, when he is spoken of as deceased before July 13, 1505.[1] It can hardly be doubted that Reid was named *Stobo*, from his birthplace in Peeblesshire, or from his connection with that ancient metropolitan church (*ecclesia plebania*).[2] Reid clearly received his annual salary for effective work done in the secretary's office; but it is quite likely that his poetical talents recommended him for office to a king of the Stewart line, for in the Stewarts there was, as a rule, the taste of the poet, and not unfrequently his genius. Under the chivalrous and romantic James the Fourth, in 1490, we find that

[1] *Treasurer's Accounts*—Preface, p. c.

[2] For Shaw and Stobo, see Mackay and Laing; Schipper, 290.

"Blinde Harry" received xviii shillings (solidi), and that his name occurs at intervals as a recipient of royal bounty until 1491-92, when it appears for the last time.[1] We have also in the same reign a recognition by the Treasury of "Wallass that tauld geists," and "Widderspune that tauld tailis to the King." These were possibly not only reciters, but *makars*.

Somewhat later than these there is another name—or rather, there are two men of the same name, who were directly or indirectly connected with the Lowlands of Scotland, and who obviously enjoyed a high literary repute in their time. These were both called Sir James Inglis—the Sir being the designation at the time of a class of priests known as the Pope's Knights. One of them was in all probability the author of the *Complaynt of Scotland*. He was chaplain to the Abbey of Cambuskenneth from about 1508 to 1550. He was present at the battle of Pinkie, and he survived until 1554. He has been confounded with Sir James Inglis, Abbot of Culross, who met his death, by violence, at least eighteen years before the *Complaynt* was published. The principal family of Inglis at this period, and from the time of Robert II., was that of Manor and Manorhead. The family also, at an early period, possessed Branksome, Goldielands, and other properties in Teviotdale, as a fief under the Douglases. By a deed of excambion (23d July 1446) half these lands were exchanged for Murthockstone or Murdieston in Lanarkshire, then held by Sir Walter Scott, progenitor of the Dukes of Buccleuch. It was thus that the Scotts got a footing in Teviotdale,

[1] *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer*, 133, edited by Dickson.

and added to the limited and bleak pastoral uplands of Bellenden and Buccleuch a wide and rich tract of land, which besides had the advantage, to men of their habits, of commanding important passes east and west into England. This excambion, in fact, opened up the career of the Scotts of Buccleuch. The family of Manor, doubtless, sent their younger sons into the Church, just as did the turbulent Turnbulls of Minto and Bedrule, one of whom was Bishop of Glasgow and founder of the University. The author of the *Complaynt* was a partisan of the French side, a Catholic and a churchman, and, as shown by the language of the work, a native of a southern or Border county.[1] Sir James Inglis of Cambuskenneth is known to fulfil the first two conditions; and, supposing him to have been a son of Inglis of Manor, he would fulfil the last of them. We have no direct evidence of the poetical talents of the author of the *Complaynt*, but he certainly was intimately acquainted with the whole poetical literature of Scotland, whether committed to writing or floating in oral tradition—a kind of knowledge he might very well have acquired in his Border home. There is strong presumptive evidence that a son of John Inglis, the laird of Manor, who died at an advanced age between 1495 and 1500, was the author of the famous *Complaynt of Scotland*. The other Sir James Inglis, of the Abbey of Culross, is referred to by Sir David Lyndsay as a poet of rich and varied faculty:—

> "And in the court bin present in thir dayis,
> That ballatis brevis[2] lustely, and layis,

[1] See Murray, Preface to the *Complaynt*, p. cxvi.

[2] Write.

Quhilkis[1] to our prince dailie they do present,
Quha can say mair than Schir James Inglis sayis,
In ballatis, farsis,[2] and in pleasand playis?
But Culross has his pen maid impotent."[3]

"This yeire, 1530," says Sir James Balfour, "the Laird of Tulliallane was beheidit the first day of Marche, for killing Mr James Inglis, Abbot of Culross; and with him a mounck of the same Abbey, a chieffe author of the Abbot's slaughter."[4] If, as is supposed, Sir David Lyndsay finished *The Papingo* in December 1530, the last line must mean that Inglis was already dead.

That this Inglis held Church preferment in Fife does not, of course, prove him to be of Fife origin. He is said, indeed, to have been born in Fife, and there was an Inglis of Tarvet there; but this, like the family of Ingliston, was a cadet of the house of Manor. And thus, possibly enough, the two contemporary men of the name of Sir James Inglis were of the same Border stock.

Is it too much to suppose that we have in the "Ettriik," the "Heryot," and the "Stobo" of Dunbar's *makars*, and possibly in the Inglis of *The Papingo*—all obviously famous men in their time—the author or authors of some of the oldest strains of the Tweed, the Ettrick, and the Yarrow? "Trigedie," or tragedy, does not mean a play, but a poem with a tragical issue—like most of the Border poems. In this case, some of these poems would take us back, at least in their original forms, to the middle of the fifteenth century, while others would very

[1] Which. [2] Farces.
[3] *The Papingo*, printed in 1538, finished in December 1530.
[4] *Annales of Scotland*, i. 261.

appropriately be referred to the epoch from 1513 to 1542.

In the collection known as *The Roxburghe Ballads* there is one to which is appended, "The words of Burne the Violer." The ballad is entitled *Leader Haughs and Yarrow.* Burne is supposed to have been one Nicol Burne, a wandering minstrel or violer of the seventeenth century—that is, of the period when the race was fast becoming extinct. Burne is said to have found shelter in his old age with the family of Thirlestane—the Maitlands, Earls of Lauderdale. Looking to the date and position of Nicol Burne, I have little doubt that Sir Walter Scott had him in his mind in the introduction to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel,* when he spoke of the aged harper as—

> "The last of all the Bards was he,
> Who sung of Border chivalry;
> For, well-a-day! their date was fled,
> His tuneful brethren all were dead;
> And he, neglected and oppressed,
> Wished to be with them, and at rest."

The old wandering violer himself says, in the last stanza of *Leader Haughs and Yarrow:*—

> "But Minstrel Burne cannot assuage
> His grief while life endureth,
> To see the changes of this age,
> That fleeting time procureth:
> For mony a place stands in hard case,
> Where blyth fowk kend nae sorrow,[1]
> With Homes that dwelt on Leader side,
> And Scots that dwelt on Yarrow." [2]

Burne may possibly have been the author of some of

[1] "Where joy was wont beforrow."—*Other reading.*
[2] Given in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany,* i. 182.

the other ballads connected with the Yarrow that now survive.

The Ballads of the Borders, historical and legendary, are obviously older than the Songs. Indeed, it is doubtful whether there is any Border song, or even Scottish song generally, now extant, which goes further back than the middle of the seventeenth century. We have record in various quarters of the names of older songs, and even of the airs to which they were sung, but beyond a fragmentary line or stanza, the songs prior to that date have passed from memory. And, while some of the ballads may originally be referred to a considerably ancient date, the form in which we now have them must be held as representing the changes and additions, the suggestions and the passing touches, of many generations. They are, in fact, growths of the ages—the continuous expression of the national heart, rather than individual productions.

That form of the romantic ballad which relates to the feeling of supernatural powers above and around, is even an earlier product of the Border land than the historical ballad itself. This feeling was for long one of the most marked peculiarities in the history of the Lowland Scot. He brought it with him from the Scandinavian north, and it was nursed into strength by the scenery of his adopted land. One of its most prevalent and powerful forms was that which acknowledged the reality and the sway of the world of Elf, or, as it was called latterly, of Fairy. Besides the well-known prevalence of Elfin belief from the earliest period among the Teutonic tribes, the ballad of *Thomas the Rhymour*, which turns on this feeling, has

the oldest manuscript authority in its favour.[1] A ballad greatly resembling the opening scene of the Rhymour, but differing in the close of the action, occurs in the *Kæmpe Viser*, or Collection of Danish Ballads, first made by Andrew Sæffrensæn in 1591—a friend of Tycho Brahe —and then added to by Peter Say in 1695.

"I laid my haffet[2] on Elfer Hill,
Saft slooming[3] clos'd my ee;
And there twa selcouth[4] ladies came,
Sae fain to speak to me.

Ane clappit me then, wi' cheek sae white,
And rown'd[5] intill mine ear;
'Rise up, fair youth, and join our dance,
Rise up, but doubt or fear!

Wake up, fair youth, and join the dance,
And we will tread the ring,
While mair nor eardly melody,
My ladies for thee sing.'

Syne ane, the fairest May on mold,
Sae sweet a sang began:
The hurling stream was stilled therewi',
Sae fast afore that ran.

The striving stream was stilled therewi',
Sae fast that wont to rin;
The sma' fish in the flood that swam,
Amo' their faes now blin'.

The fishes a' in flood that were,
Lay still, baith fin and tail;
The sma' fowls in the shaw began
To whitter[6] in the dale.

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[1] See *supra*, i. 344 *et seq.*
[2] Cheek, side of the head.
[3] Light slumber.
[4] Seld-couth, seldom known or seen, strange.
[5] Spoke, whispered.
[6] To warble in a low voice.

'O hear, thou fair, thou young swain,
And thou wi' us will dwell;
Then will we teach thee book and rune,
To read and write sae well.

I'll lear thee how the bear to bind,
And fästen to the aik tree;
The dragon, that liggs[1] on mickle[2] goud,[3]
Afore thee fast shall flee.'

They dancèd out, they dancèd in,
In the Elfer ring sae green;
All silent sat the fair young swain,
And on his sword did lean.

'Now hear, thou fair, thou young swain,
But and thou till us speak,
Then shall on sword and on sharp knife
Thy dearest heart-blood reek.'

Had God nae made my luck sae gude,
That the cock did waf[4] his wing,
I boot[5] ha'e bidden on Elfer Hill,
In the Elf-ladies' ring."[6]

Sir Oluf and the Elf King's Daughter, in the same collection, further illustrates the existence and strength of the Elfin belief in the north of Europe. *Sir Oluf*, who was about to be married, refused the advances of the Elf King's daughter, whereupon—

"She's smitten Sir Oluf—it strak to his heart,
He never before had kend[7] sic a smart;

Then lifted him up on his ambler red;
'And now Sir Oluf ride hame to thy bride.'

And when he came till the castell yett,
His mother she stood and leant thereat.

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[1] Lies. [2] Much. [3] Gold.
[4] Flap. [5] Must.
[6] Jamieson's *Ballads and Songs*, i. 225. [7] Known or felt.

'O hear ye, Sir Oluf, my ain dear son,
Wherefor is your lire sae blae and wan?'

'O well may my lire be wan and blae,
For I hae been in the Elf-women's play.'

'O hear ye, Sir Oluf, my son, my pride,
And what shall I say to thy young bride?'

'Ye'll say that I've ridden but into the wood,
To prieve gin my horse and hounds are good.'

Ear[1] on the morn, when night was gane,
The bride she cam wi' the bridal train.

They skinked[2] the mead, they skinked the wine:
'O where is Sir Oluf, bridegroom mine?'

'Sir Oluf has ridden but into the wood
To prieve gin his horse and hounds are good.'

And she took up the scarlet red,
And there lay Sir Oluf, and he was dead!

Ear on the morn, whan it was day,
Three likes[3] were ta'en from the castle away;

Sir Oluf the leal, and his bride sae fair,
And his mither that died wi' sorrow and care,

And lightly the elves so feat and free,
They dance all under the greenwood tree!"[4]

These show at once the community of conception between Scandinavian and Lowland Scot in the matter of Elfin character and power.

The ancient and picturesque epic of *Beowulf* helps us in a measure to know and feel the dark and gruesome side of the supernatural beliefs and conceptions which filled the minds of our ancestors, whether Scandinavian or Angle. According to one view, this poem was pro-

[1] Early. [2] Poured out. [3] Corpses laid out.
[4] Jamieson's *Ballads*, i. 219.

duced on the Continent, and was brought into our island by the Angles, who colonised Bernicia and Deira in the sixth century. A later opinion is that it was framed in Mercia as an allegorical poem, suited to the times, in the last quarter of the eighth century.[1] It was at least a powerful and prevalent influence on early Anglo-Saxon literature, and the subsequent mediæval romances. Hrothgar's royal hall of Heorot had been invaded o' nights by a monster in human shape—Grendel—who slew and devoured follower after follower of the king. Beowulf, a stranger, guest of the king, watches the prowling assassin, sees and grasps him in terrible struggle. Grendel escapes, flees across the moor, but leaves his arm in Beowulf's grip. Grendel's dam afterwards visits the hall when all are asleep, and slays a knight. These mysterious visitants of evil, half fiendish, half human, dwell in a gruesome lake not far away. Beowulf undertakes the task of going down into its dark waters and slaying the monsters. This is the description of them and their abode, and it shows the kind of imaginary creations with which our Angle forefathers peopled solitary moor and lake and fen. The king says, "I did hear say by landowners, leeds of mine, heads of halls, that they saw a pair of such huge mark-stalkers, keeping the moors, creatures of strange fashion; one of them was, according to the clearest they could make out, a beldam's likeness, the other miscreated thing trod lonely tracks in man's figure, only he was huger than any other man; him in old times the country-folk used to call Grendel: they know not about any father, whether they had any pedi-

[1] *The Deeds of Beowulf*, by John Earle, M.A., Int., lxxv *et seq.* (1892.)

gree before them of mysterious goblins. They inhabit unvisited land, wolf-crags, windy bluffs, the dread fen track, where the mountain waterfall, amid precipitous gloom vanisheth beneath, flood under earth; not far hence it is, reckoning by miles, that the Mere standeth, and over it hang rimy groves; a wood with clustered roots overshrouds the water. There may every night a fearful portent be seen, fire on the flood; none so wise liveth of the children of men as to know the depth. Though the heath-roamer, when exhausted by hounds, the hart strong in his horns, make for the wood-coverts, driven from far; sooner will he resign his breath, his life on the bank, sooner than he will therein plunge his head. That is no comfortable place; therefrom mount up the raging waves, murky to the clouds, when wind stirreth foul weather till the air thickens, the skies crack."[1] Beowulf was to face these horrors of supernatural imagination and of dreaded earthly scenery. How he did it, and succeeded in extirpating beldam and son, is bravely told.[2] The point of interest here is that the world outside the dwellings of the people—"steep stone banks, narrow gullies, strait lonesome paths, an untravelled route, sheer bluffs, many habitations of nicors" —were dreadful and repulsive because of the evil spirits which inhabited them—nicors, etyns (giants), and orcs,—fiends in the lakes and fens. This feeling pervades all early Saxon poetry. Layamon describes a lake in Scotland thus:—

"That is a wonderful lake
Set in middle earth,

[1] *Beowulf*, xx, ed. Earle. [2] xxii *et seq.*

With fen and with reed,
With water very broad,
With fishes and with fowls,
With ugly things.
That water is immeasurably broad;
Nickers bathe therein,
There is play of elves
In the venomous pool."[1]

This was the early appearance of nature to our forefathers, of moor and lake, of river and solitude of mountain, of the lonely places of the earth—all peopled in their depth and breadth by forms mysterious and supersensible, generally hostile to man, here and there showing a half-mad or even frolicsome and friendly spirit, as we have storm, darkness, passing gleam, sportive wind, and pleasant sunshine in the element of the atmosphere. Monkish Christianity afterwards made those superstitious forms into devils and angels, finally some of them into warlocks and witches. But the possession of the outlying world by forms mostly demoniac was one great reason why men feared and were repelled from grand and lonely nature—moor, mountain, river, and lake—all through the middle ages, and until very near our own time. And from this source in early Angle literature have come most of the popular beliefs regarding the supersensible world and its denizens which appear in our ballad literature. It would be idle to seek to apportion the heritage to Saxon and Cymri, for we find—at and after the dawn of literature—at least among the people of Brittany, Cornwall, and Wales, Mercia, Northumbria, and Strathclyde, beliefs of this kind very closely akin.

There were various classes of Elves in Teutonic my-

[1] Cf. Wright, *Middle Ages*, i. viii.

thology. But the original of the Scottish Elf, afterwards known as Fairy, was probably the *berg-elfen*, or mountain elves, known in Scandinavia as *duergar*. They appear "in the Sagas and in the Edda. They were a race of dwarfish spirits, inhabiting the rocky mountains, and approaching in some respects to the human nature. Their attributes, amongst which we recognise the features of the modern fairy, were supernatural wisdom and prescience, and skill in the mechanical arts, especially in the fabrication of arms. They are further described as capricious, vindictive, and easily irritated."[1] This original conception came in the middle ages to be mixed up with notions of witchcraft; but the two beliefs were originally essentially distinct. To suppose a mortal endowed with supernatural power is one thing; to imagine supernatural beings surrounding this mortal life is quite another thing. The one might readily come to be felt as exceedingly repulsive and unnatural — especially when connected with diabolical inspiration; the other was softened by being elevated to an ideal sphere outside of the real world—as belonging neither to heaven nor to hell; and thus it was contemplated with feelings mainly of wonder and awe. For purposes of poetry, the Elfin conception was obviously the much more effective of the two.

The Elf was in its origin a personification of certain features of nature. Possibly the word is connected, as has been supposed, with *alb* or *albus*, white, and thus the spirit rose as a fancy out of the glancing sunlight as it travels across the hill-face, or the glimpses of the moon

[1] *Minstrelsy*, ii. 255.

as they strike white into the depths of glens. Noon and midnight were the periods of full Elfin power. Even if we suppose the root to be the same with that of Elbe, or running stream, we may quite well include the notion of sparkling light. In the stream dwelt the more malignant *Wœter-Elf*, or Kelpie. He was the spirit of foam and flood. The ordinary elf was, however, a creation of the earth — a dweller in mountain and on moorland. The chase of light and shade, the fitful outbreak of the wind among the hills, the varying forms of cloud that now darken and then throw a shimmering gleam over the moor, represent the inconstant side of nature. This, not wholly beneficent or pleasing, not wholly hurtful or disagreeable to the dwellers on earth, was typified and reflected in the unsteady moral nature of the Elfin beings and in their freakish impulses, directed sometimes to the good and sometimes to the harm of mortals. The Elf or Fairy, as a creature of the wilds, was the symbolical balance of the good and evil wrought out there by natural powers; while the *wœter-elf*, or kelpie, the spirit that lived in the burn or water, being a similar natural personification, was yet more thoroughly an enemy of man; for the element in which he resided commonly announced itself, in a mountainous country, by suddenly rising in flood and wrath, and thus proclaimed itself most exclusively as a destroying power:—

"The side was stey, and the bottom deep,
Frae bank to brae, the water pouring;
And the bonny grey mare did sweat for fear,
For she heard the water-kelpy roaring."[1]

[1] *Annan Water.*

The Elf was thus the expression of the poetry that lay in the heart of the people. It was the earliest imaginative outcome of the feeling for nature. It came forth as a personification of its features in the form, as might have been expected, mainly of dread, yet not unmixed with a sense of tenderness and ethereal beauty. The rugged rocks and the deep caverns must needs be peopled, and the dwellers therein must have a nature corresponding not only to what was inward and gloomy, but to what was outward, green, sunny, and bright, for the elves lived in both worlds. Naturally fancy framed for the finer spots of earth fairer forms than the ordinary men and women of earth. Thus it was that links of green on the hills, the sunny glimmer of the birken shaw, were peopled with ethereal forms; and soft green knowes were supposed to cover secret halls, where the spirits held their revels; and the strange wandering sounds that come across the moorland, and are heard high up among lonely crags, were felt to be the echoings of the bells and the bridle-ring of the Fairy riders.

The attributes of the original Scandinavian Fairy were greatly modified during the middle ages by Christianity, by classical conceptions, and by the fancy of English poets. But in Scotland they retained most of the harsh and stern features of the original. To this end "the face of the country might have some effect; as we should naturally attribute a less malicious disposition, and a less frightful appearance to the fays who glide by moonlight through the oaks of Windsor, than to those who haunt the solitary heaths and lofty mountains of the north."[1]

[1] *Minstrelsy*, ii. 307.

The account which the knight in the ballad of *The Young Tamlane* — unsurpassed among Fairy poems — gives of his spiriting away by the Fairies, and of their life, may be taken as fairly embodying the popular faith, and as showing how closely it shadowed forth an impersonation of the aspects of outward nature. This ballad obviously presents some modern diction, and probably also modern stanzas, which it has acquired in the course of its oral transmission. But the whole conception of the story, and the main part of the details, point to a considerable antiquity. The title is also given in the *Complaynt of Scotland*. It was obviously well known as far back at least as the early part of the sixteenth century. But there is every probability, on internal grounds of story and conception, that the original is as old as the formation even of the northern English dialect. "It seems," says Leyden, "to have been originally a romance of Faëry, and was probably converted by popular tradition into a historical ballad." "Tam Lin" and "Tam Lene" are apparently corruptions of Thomalin or Tomlin.

"The pypers' drone was out of tune,
Sing young Thomlin;
Be merry and merry and twice so merrie,
With the light of the moon."[1]

The ballad runs as follows:—

"When I was a boy just turned of nine,
My uncle sent for me,
To hunt, and hawk, and ride with him,
And keep him cumpanie.

[1] *Complaynt of Scotland*, Introd., 231, 273. (1801.)

There came a wind out of the north,
A sharp wind and a snell;
And a deep sleep came over me,
And frae my horse I fell.

The Queen of Fairies keppit[1] me
In yon green hill to dwell;
And I'm a fairy, lyth and limb,
Fair ladye, view me well.

But we that live in Fairyland,
No sickness know, nor pain,
I quit my body when I will,
And take to it again.

I quit my body when I please,
Or unto it repair;
We can inhabit at our ease,
In either earth or air.

Our shapes and size we can convert
To either large or small;
An old nutshell's the same to us
As is the lofty hall.

We sleep in rosebuds soft and sweet,
We revel in the stream;
We wanton lightly on the wind,
Or glide on a sunbeam."

But elfin pageant or fairy dance never would tolerate the scrutiny of mortal eye. Glance of it there might be; a mortal might see that it was, and be dazzled and interested for a moment by the wondrous and unearthly sight; but no sooner was the group aware of the curious gaze of one of middle-erd than it passed away—the green spot of the revels, the hall with its crystal floor and golden roof, the quaint pageantry of living forms within it, were lost in the mists of the gloaming, or fused with the clear-

[1] Caught while falling.

spreading and formless glimpses of the autumn moon, out of which fancy had originally evoked them :—

> "When we cam there, wi' wee wee knichts
> Were ladies dancing, jimp and sma';
> But in the twinkling of an e'e
> Baith green and ha' war clein awa."

The Elfin world was thus surrounded, to the popular imagination, with a deep sense of mystery. As a power that interfered with mortals, often spirited them away to an unseen realm, it was a source of dread. It inspired that peculiar feeling which arises from the thought of a power mysterious and supersensible, which yet touched the margin of this earthly life of ours. This is the feeling which, in various degrees of intensity, is displayed in the Fairy ballads, and which helps to give them their wonderful influence, even now, on the imagination. It is illustrated in the hold which the Queen of Elfinland had over Thomas the Rhymour, and in the haunting sense of a time of recall to "another cuntré" which overshadowed his whole subsequent life. And the mystery of Elfinland is deepened, and its power over the emotion of dread intensified, by the glimpses which we get, in the ballad of the Rhymour and others, of the dark ways that lead to the Elfin world, and the life that is there—neither checkered by mortal change or calamity, nor cheered by mortal hopes—removed, on the one hand, from the pitiless agony of hell, and shut out from the pure bliss of heaven. The two stanzas which describe the unearthly journey, illustrate what has been said regarding the modifications which the older ballads have undergone. They are different from the lines in the oldest copy, yet they are very grand :—

"O they rade on, and farther on,
And they waded through rivers aboon the knee,
And they saw neither sun nor moon,
But they heard the roaring of the sea.

It was mirk mirk nicht, and there was nae stern[1] licht,
And they waded through red blude to the knee,
For a' the blude that's shed on earth
Rins through the springs o' that cuntrie."

The ballad of *The Rhymour*, but particularly that of *The Young Tamlane*, brings out the dark as well as the bright side of the Elfin faith. The latter pictures a scene as weird and awesome as the heart of man has conceived. The good folks of fairy were not altogether free from the powers of evil; for they had to pay *kane*[2] or *teind*[3] every seventh year to hell, in the shape of a member of their own company, or of a living man. No doubt this was a post-Christian element of the creed, arising from the notion of vicarious sacrifice, which, in the middle ages, the devil was supposed entitled to exact. The notion appears in the old ballad of the Rhymour; it is the ground of the action in *Young Tamlane*. The knight had been spirited away by Elfin enchantment, and was now in its power. The probability was that when the infernal tithe came to be paid he would be the victim handed over to hell:—

"Then would I never tire, Janet,
In Elfish land to dwell;
But aye, at every seven years,
They pay the teind to hell;
And I am sae fat and fair of flesh,
I fear 'twill be mysel'."

---

[1] Star. [2] Payment in kind. [3] Tithe or tenth.

There was, however, a possibility of rescue; the enchantment which held him might be broken, and he himself restored to an earthly life. But what a degree of resolution and courage on the part of the friend or lover of the Elfin thrall was needed to effect a rescue! On one night of the year only was this possible. On Halloween, fair Janet, the lover of the Fairy-bound knight, must wait alone on the wild moor for the unearthly procession in which he was to pass, and there recognise, seize, and hold him captive:—

"Gloomy, gloomy was the night,
And eiry was the way,
And fair Janet, in her green mantle,
To Miles Cross,[1] she did gae.

The heavens were black, the night was dark,
And dreary was the place;
But Janet stood with eager wish
Her lover to embrace.

Betwixt the hours of twelve and one,
A north wind tore the bent;
And straight she heard strange elritch sounds
Upon the wind which went.

About the dead hour of the night,
She heard the bridles ring;
And Janet was as glad o' that
As any earthly thing!

Their oaten pipes blew wondrous shrill,
The hemlock small blew clear;
And louder notes from hemlock large,
And bog-reed struck the ear;
But solemn sounds or sober thoughts
The Fairies cannot bear.
. . . . . .

[1] Perhaps Mary's Cross.

Fair Janet stood with mind unmoved,
The dreary heath upon;
And louder, louder waxed the sound
As they came riding on.

Will o' Wisp before them went,
Sent forth a twinkling light;
And soon she saw the Fairy bands
All riding in her sight.

And first gaed by the black black steed,
And then gaed by the brown;
But fast she gript the milk-white steed,
And pu'd the rider down.

She pu'd him frae the milk-white steed,
And loot the bridle fa';
And up their raise an erlish[1] cry
'He's won among us a'!'

They shaped him in fair Janet's arms,
An esk,[2] but and an adder;
She held him fast in every shape,
To be her bairn's father.

They shaped him in her arms at last,
A mother-naked man:
She wrapped him in her green mantle,
And sae her true love wan!"

"A north wind tore the bent;" truer, finer pictorial line than this was never written. It expresses perfectly the feeling which, in late autumn, the north-west wind carries to the heart of one passing amid the tossed and withered bent of the moorland. And at night the sound of the resistless wind, doing its work with fell and fatal fury, is the all-possessing impression of the solitary traveller on the moor. With this eerie sound in her ear, and the prospect of the unearthly procession coming on, intangible

[1] Elritch, unearthly. [2] Newt.

and mysterious, out of the grey weather-gleam, and the palpitating sense that the fate of her lover was wholly in her hands, how great was the staunch will and the strong courage that were needed for the rescue!

Perhaps in this old tale there lurks a higher moral than we are ready to perceive. Possibly it may point to the struggle, often found so hard, with the repulsive shapes by which the powers of evil are ever ready to interpose between us and what may be our highest, truest good. There is a fine lesson of courage and faith and self-sacrifice, even for us, in the old mythic fairy creed.

The abstraction of mortals from their earthly home, especially of fair maidens, by fairy power, and, in some cases, their forcible rescue, were for long the current subjects of legend and traditional story in the Forest. Down to the time of James Hogg, indeed, and perhaps later, they were even matters of cherished belief. Hogg lived in the transition period between the general acceptance of such a creed and its partial decay. No side of old legend stirred his untutored imagination more than this; and no Scottish poet has dealt with the power and the realm of Fairy more vividly and impressively than the Bard of Ettrick. He caught up several of the floating traditions which actually localised the fairy doings, and this, as he haunted the hills and moors where they were said to have taken place, brought the old legend home to his everyday life and feeling. He was thus led to an accurate observation and description of the reputed scenes of the story, and of the haunts of the Fairies. These had received only bare mention in the tradition itself, and little more than this even when they had been put into

verse in the older time. But all these spots he knew well; many of them were the daily round of the Shepherd and his collie. The legends he had learned thus acquired something of the reality which he felt. Hence Hogg's poems of Fairy are remarkable for the fulness, the richness, and the accuracy of the description of the country—of hill, glen, and moor. This was the new or modern element in the poetry of the Borders. It had been but imperfectly represented in the older ballads. It was first distinctly brought before the world by Leyden in his *Scenes of Infancy;* and with Hogg this new fresh element of Border literature came in at its best and purest through the localisation of fairy legends.

The best proof and illustration of this appear in the ballad of *Old David* in the *Wake.* "Lochy-Law," Hogg tells us, "where the principal scene of this tale is laid, is a hill on the lands of Shorthope in the wilds of Ettrick. The Fairy Slack is up in the middle of the hill, a very curious ravine, and would be much more so when overshadowed with wood. The Black-Burn, which joins the Ettrick immediately below this hill, has been haunted from time immemorial, both by the Fairies and the ghost of a wandering minstrel who was cruelly murdered there, and who sleeps in a lone grave a small distance from the ford."[1]

The burden of the ballad is the story of the rescue of a maiden from fairy power, founded on an old legend of the Forest. The victim is represented as Anne of Raeburn, and the rescuers are Old David Laidlaw of Garwell in Eskdalemuir and his seven sons. By one of these,

[1] *The Wake*, Note ix.

Owen, the maiden spirited away had been silently beloved. But no one knew whither she had gone: and it was only after David and his sons had broken into the fairy caverns that she was discovered and rescued. The power of the story is, however, in this instance inferior to the pictures of scenery in the ballad. The old man first saw the fairy pageant at early morn pass o'er "Wonfell's wizard brae" at the head of Eskdale. Then—

"Fast spur they on through bush and brake;
To Ettrick's woods their course they take.
Old David followed still in view,
Till near the Lochilaw they drew;
There, in a deep and wondrous dell,
Where wandering sunbeam never fell,
Where noontide breezes never blew,
From flowers to drink the morning dew;
There, underneath the sylvan shade,
The fairies' spacious bower was made;
Its rampart was the tangling sloe,
The bending brier and mistletoe;
And o'er its roof the crooked oak
Waved wildly from the frowning rock.
This wondrous bower, this haunted dell,
The forest shepherd shunn'd as hell!
When sound of fairies' silver horn
Came on the evening breezes borne,
Homeward he fled, nor made a stand,
Thinking the spirits hard at hand.
But when he heard the eldrich swell
Of giggling laugh and bridle bell,
Or saw the riders troop along,
His orisons were loud and strong.
His household fare he yielded free
To this mysterious company."

David and his sons proceed at night to the supposed haunt of this aërial band, and we have the following picture:—

"That evening fell so sweetly still,
So mild on lonely moor and hill,
The little genii of the fell
Forsook the purple heather-bell,
And all their dripping beds of dew,
In wind-flower, thyme, and violet blue;
Aloft their viewless looms they heave,
And dew-webs round the helmets weave.
The waning moon her lustre threw,
Pale round her throne of softened blue;
Her circuit round the southland sky
Was languid, low, and quickly bye;
Leaning on cloud so faint and fair,
And cradled on the golden air;
Modest and pale as maiden bride,
She sank upon the trembling tide."

After slaying the guardian of the cavern—

"A sprite of dreadful form and air,
His grizzly beard flowed round his throat
Like shaggy hair of mountain goat"—

the warriors succeeded in destroying the band, and in rescuing Anne of Raeburn and other captive maidens. And—

"E'er since, in Ettrick's glens so green,
Spirits, though there, are seldom seen;
And fears of Elf and Fairy raid
Have, like a morning dream, decayed."

In *Kilmeny*, Hogg is at his highest and best, and the inspiration there is the old fairy legend; but it is its purer breath, carrying him into an ideal sphere whose rare and fanciful beauty is shadowed with a weird awe—

"A land of love, and a land of lychte,
Withoutten sonne, or mone, or nychte."

Yet even here there is the same careful delineation of the aspects of the natural world out of which the fairy

creation arose, and these are so linked with the main personage of the story as to fuse in one the material and the moral—the heart of natural beauty and the soul of purity :—

"Bonnye Kilmeny gede[1] up the glen ;
But it wasna to meit Duneira's men,
Nor the rosy munke of the isle to see,
For Kilmeny was pure as pure culde be.
It was only to heir the yorline[2] syng,
And pu the blew kress flouir round the spring ;
To pu the hyp and the hyndberrye,[3]
And the nitt that hang fra the hesil tree ;
For Kilmeny was pure as pure culde be.
. . . . . .
Quhan mony lang day had comit and fledde,
Quhan grief grew calm, and hope was dede,
Quhan mess for Kilmeny's soul had beine sung,
Quhan the bedis-man had prayit, and the deide-bell rung;
Lete, lete in ane glomyn, quhan all was still,
Quhan the freenge[4] was reid on the wastlin hill,
The wud was sere, the moon i' the wene,
The reike[5] o' the cot hung ouir the playne,
Like ane little wee cludde in the world its lene ;
Quhan the ingle lowit[6] with an eiry leme,[7]
Lete, lete in the glomyn Kilmeny came heme !
Kilmeny, Kilmeny, quhair haif ye beine ?
Long haif we socht baith holt[8] and deine ;[9]
By lynn,[10] by furde,[11] and green wudde tree,
Yet ye ir helsome and fayir to see.
Quhair gat ye that joup[12] of the lille scheine ?
That bonny snoode[13] of the byrk sa greine ?
And these roses, the fayrist that evir war seine ?
Kilmeny, Kilmeny, quhair haif ye beine ?"

---

[1] Went. [2] Yellowhammer.
[3] Either raspberry or brambleberry. [4] Fringe.
[5] Smoke. [6] Blazed. [7] Flame. [8] Wood. [9] Hollow.
[10] Pool at the foot of a waterfall, sometimes waterfall itself.
[11] Ford. [12] Mantle, pelisse.
[13] A fillet for the head, binding up a young woman's hair.

Then her return to earth is thus ushered in:—

> "With distant museke, soft and deipe,
> They lullit Kilmeny sunde asleep;
> And quhan scho wekinit, scho lay her lene,
> An happit with flowris in the greenwud wene.
> Quhan seven lang yeiris had cumit and fledde;
> Quhan grief was calm, and hope was dede;
> Quhan scarce was rememberit Kilmeny's name,
> Lete, lete in a glomyn Kilmeny cam heme!"

The association of the perfect purity of womanhood with the flowers and the music of the greenwood, with the sparkle of the stream, and with the pathos of the gloamin', is a conception as happy and as happily executed as any in simple and natural, that is, in the best poetry. The Shepherd had meditated the legends on the moorland, until they became a part of himself, and of the ground he trod; he was thus able to picture the real features of the scene, and, inspired by the intensity of his feeling, to rise to the unique ideal which he more or less perfectly expressed, and which only one under the impulses of his training and circumstances could even have conceived. This is the main reason why the Shepherd of the Forest escapes the inflated and the artistically unreal whenever he deals with fairy scenes.

The fancy which evoked the fairy form from the spreading upland and moor lived on in Scottish poetry for many an age. Latterly it located the spirit of the moorland, when he came to live alone, in the grey stone-circles and in the rocking-stones which form picturesque and noticeable features on the Lowland hills—prehistoric remains, round which historic tradition and legend have

grown. Seldom has the weird fancy been better put than by Leyden in the *Cout of Keeldar*. The knight, heedless of the warning dream of his wife, has ridden through the dawn up the southern slope of the Cheviots to the "Redswire dun." There unawares he evokes by his bugle-blast the unearthly and irritated shape which presaged his fate ere the close of day:—

"And when he reached the Redswire high,
His bugle Keeldar blew;
And round did float, with clamorous note
And scream, the hoarse curlew.

The next blast that young Keeldar blew,
The wind grew deadly still;
But the sleek ferns, with fingery leaves,
Waved wildly o'er the hill.

The third blast that young Keeldar blew,
Still stood the limber fern;
And a Wee Man of swarthy hue,
Upstarted by a cairn.

His russet weeds were brown as heath,
That clothes the upland fell;
And the hair of his head was frizzly red,
As the purple heather-bell.

An urchin,[1] clad in prickles red,
Clung cowering to his arm;
The hounds they howled, and backward fled,
As struck by Fairy charm.

'Why rises high the stag-hound's cry,
Where stag-hound ne'er should be?
Why wakes that horn the silent morn,
Without the leave of me?'

'Brown Dwarf, that o'er the moorland strays,
Thy name to Keeldar tell!'
'The Brown Man of the muir who stays
Beneath the heather-bell.

[1] Hedgehog.

'''Tis sweet beneath the heather-bell,
To live in Autumn brown;
And sweet to hear the lav'rocks swell,
Far, far from tower and town.

'But, woe betide the shrilling horn,
The chase's surly cheer!
And ever that hunter is forlorn,
Whom first at morn I hear.'

Says 'Weal nor woe, nor friend nor foe,
In thee we hope or dread.'
But, ere the bugles green could blow,
The Wee Brown Man had fled.

And onward, onward, hound and horse,
Young Keeldar's band have gone;
And soon they wheel, in rapid course,
Around the Keeldar stone.

Green vervain round its base did creep,
A powerful seed that bore;
And oft, of yore, its channels deep
Were stained with human gore.

And still, when blood-drops, clotted thin,
Hang the gray moss upon,
The spirit murmurs from within,
And shakes the rocking-stone.

Around, around, young Keeldar wound,
And call'd in scornful tone,
With him to pass the barrier ground,
The Spirit of the Stone.

The rude crag rock'd, 'I come for death,
I come to work thy woe!'
And 'twas the Brown Man of the Heath,
That murmured from below."

The spirit of solitude and silence on the uplands—the spirit that loves and guards the gentle creatures of the wilds—wroth at intrusion, at heedless sport, and thoughtless slaughter, is felt to rise up here in rebuke and

revenge. The Brown Man of the Heath has perhaps in him a more malignant nature than Pan of old, but he, too, would suddenly express his irritation at a break of the dreamful stillness of the noonday tide :—

> "I durst not, shepherd, O I durst not pipe
> At noontide ; fearing Pan, who at that hour
> Rests from the toils of hunting. Harsh is he :
> Wrath at his nostrils aye sits sentinel." [1]

Besides witchcraft there were two forms of supernatural power. The one was that of the "Magus," or Magician, who could command the spirits or fiends of the other world, and bend them to his purposes. The other was that of the Wizard, or necromancer, who was simply in league with those spirits, and from whom he could borrow assistance in his designs and purposes. To the Borderer, Michael Scott of Oakwood was the type of the one, and apparently Gifford of Yester the type of the other. The repute of the power of Michael Scott, or "auld Michael," as he was popularly called, hovered as a shadow over the Lowlands for more than five hundred years. His magical function was no mere phantom of the imagination. It was thoroughly believed in among the dwellers in the vales of the Teviot, the Ettrick, and the Yarrow, down to very recent times. That he could and did control restless fiends was the faith of the Borderer for many a generation. That he spoke words which cleft the Eildons in three was a mythic exaggeration—hardly a popular belief. But when

[1] Theocritus, *Idyll*, i. (Calverley's version). The last line is very fine :—

ἐντὶ δὲ πικρός,
καὶ οἱ ἀεὶ δριμεῖα χολὰ ποτὶ ῥινὶ κάθηται.

"Master Michael Scott's man
Sought bread and gat nane"

from the churlish farmer's wife, and, through the magic rune, the wife, husband, and servants were all set dancing wildly round his enchanted bonnet—this was thoroughly accepted as genuine by the peasantry for many an age. The exploit was regarded by them as quite within the limits of warlock power, as the punishment for the inhospitality was held to be well deserved.

The first and second cantos of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* owe their singular impressiveness mainly to this old inspiration. The poet fuses together two classes of recognised supernatural powers—the personifications of nature, the spirits residing and moving in river and fell —and the "Magus," or controller of restless and tricky fiends, represented by Michael Scott and symbolised in his hidden "book of might." The Lady of Buccleuch of the time, vulgarly reputed to be addicted to witchcraft, was a Bethune or Beaton of wizard ancestry; and she was supposed mysteriously to commune with the unseen powers of nature and of the infernal world, who now and again would murmur dimly around the tower of Branksome. She was now the widow of Sir Walter Scott, whom his illustrious namesake has glorified, not very deservedly. For he was one who is found security for the perpetrators of more deeds of violence and cowardly bloodshed than any other name in the criminal annals of the time. He met his death at the hands of the Kers on the High Street of Edinburgh in 1552—in revenge for the slaughter, in 1526, of the Laird of Cessford at Halyden, near Melrose, by an Elliot, retainer of Buccleuch.

"When Home and Douglas, in the van,
Bore down Buccleuch's retiring clan,
Till gallant Cessford's heart-blood dear,
Reeked on dark Elliot's Border spear."

His widow, the Lady Buccleuch, was popularly believed to have lent her influence to lead Mary to a part in the murder of Darnley. Men and women associated with such deeds must needs look for dark endings and times of sorrow. The truly heroic thing about them is when they bear their fates well.

Scott thus powerfully puts the weird situation:—

"Of noble race the Ladye came,
Her father was a clerk of fame,
Of Bethune's line of Picardie:
He learned the art that none may name,
In Padua, far beyond the sea.
Men said he changed his mortal frame,
By feat of magic mystery:
For when in studious mood he paced
St Andrew's cloistered hall,
His form no darkening shadow traced
Upon the sunny wall.

And of his skill, as bards avow,
He taught that Ladye fair,
Till to her bidding she could bow
The viewless forms of air.
And now she sits in secret bower,
In old Lord David's western tower,
And listens to a heavy sound,
That moans the mossy turrets round.
Is it the roar of Teviot's tide,
That chafes against the scaur's red side?
Is it the wind that swings the oaks?
Is it the echo from the rocks?
What may it be, the heaving sound,
That moans old Branksome's turrets round?

At the sullen, moaning sound,
The ban-dogs bay and howl;
And, from the turrets round,
Loud whoops the startled owl.
In the hall, both squire and knight
Swore that a storm was near,
And looked forth to view the night,
But the night was still and clear.
From the sound of Teviot's tide,
Chafing with the mountain's side,
From the groan of the wind-swung oak,
From the sullen echo of the rock,
From the voice of the coming storm,
The Ladye knew it well!
It was the Spirit of the Flood that spoke,
And he called on the Spirit of the Fell.

River Spirit.

'Sleep'st thou, brother?'

Mountain Spirit.

'Brother, nay—
On my hills the moonbeams play,
From Craikcross to Skelfhill Pen,
By every rill, in every glen,
Merry elves their morris pacing,
To aërial minstrelsy,
Emerald rings on brown heath tracing,
Trip it deft and merrily.
Up, and mark their nimble feet!
Up, and list their music sweet!'

River Spirit.

'Tears of an imprisoned maiden
Mix with my polluted stream;
Margaret of Branksome, sorrow-laden,
Mourns beneath the moon's pale beam.
Tell me, thou, who view'st the stars,
When shall cease these feudal jars?
What shall be the maiden's fate?
Who shall be the maiden's mate?'

Mountain Spirit.

'Arthur's slow wain his course doth roll,
In utter darkness, round the pole;
The Northern Bear lowers black and grim;
Orion's studded belt is dim;
Twinkling faint, and distant far,
Shimmers through mist each planet star;
Ill may I read their high decree!
But no kind influence deign they shower
On Teviot's tide and Branksome's tower,
Till pride be quell'd, and love be free.'"

It will be admitted that the last word of the old mountain mythology was a noble lesson, well needed when supposed to be uttered, and true for all time. The other stanzas, in which the widowed Lady of Buccleuch is depicted as having recourse to the power and formulæ of the dead magician of the name, are well known as among the grandest of Scott's delineations.

Another form of supernatural power which affected the belief and actions of the Lowland Scot was Witchcraft. This was as thoroughly believed for hundreds of years on the Borders, and indeed over Scotland generally, as any form of the supernatural could possibly be. It was, of course, no new or special belief. It was known to Hebrew, Greek, and Roman. It was doubtless an ancestral tradition which the Teuton inherited from his widespread Aryan forefathers. Not only the people, but the Church, the courts of law—all the culture of the country—accepted witches and witchcraft as an unquestionable power. The trials for this crime, as given in Scottish records, show some most extraordinary features. Men and women who had to all appearance lived blamelessly, and observant of all the ordinary

duties of life, are found suddenly to be struck, as it were, by a supernatural power, related, at least after Christianity spread in the country, to a diabolic origin, which bound and constrained them to frequent nightly orgies, in which the awesome, the ludicrous, and the repulsive are mingled together in the most outrageous fashion. "The Confessions," as they are called, of the parties to the devil's bond, given sometimes under torture, sometimes freely, contain dark and gruesome touches which it seems almost impossible for human imagination to conceive.

But while the Border ballads contain numerous references to enchantments, and even sorcery, the witch or wizard is not directly portrayed. Nor is the wielder of this supernatural power a favourite with the older singers. The power itself was felt to be so painfully real for the time, so little matter of the past or of the ideal, that its repulsiveness alone was its prevailing feature. And the conception of a dread power of this sort, generally, nay wholly, malignant, as dwelling in a fellow-creature, and inspired in him or her by Satanic agency, was an obvious source of terror. It further appeared as such an absolute perversion and disfigurement of the image of God in man, that popular poetry shrunk from it as a subject even of delineation. It is introduced in a few of the ballads, but in such a way as to show that it was a thing to be loathed and got rid of, even by supposing the action of more beneficent supernatural powers of another type. In *Willie's Lady*, for example, the lady is witch-bound by his hellish mother, and the key to her power is got from her by a stratagem. In *Alison Gross*, a witch who turned a scornful lover into a worm or snake that crawled about

a tree, the spell is broken on Halloween by a beneficent fairy.

It was not until witchcraft had become, at least among the educated classes, a belief of the past, that it rose to the rank of a theme of poetic delineation. And then it was the quaint and picturesque, often awesome scenes of nightly revel, which attracted the poet. But when this was so—when memory came to mellow the past, and imagination raised the element of dread from the actual to the ideal—James Hogg was able, in his *Witch of Fife*, notwithstanding much that is rough and unartistic in details, to sway the emotions by a series of pictures as eerie, wild, and fanciful as anything in modern literature:—

"The first leet-night,[1] whan the new moon set,
Whan all was douffe[2] and mirk,
We saddled our naigis wi the moon-fern leaf,
And rode fra Kilmerrin Kirk.

Some horses were of the brume-cow[3] framit,
And some of the green bay-tree;
But mine was made of ane humloke[4] shaw,
And a stout stallion was he!

We raid the tod[5] doune on the hill,
The martin[6] on the law,
And we hunted the hoolet[7] out of brethe,
And forcit him doune to fa'!

And aye we raid, and sae merrily we raid,
Throw the merkist[8] gloffis[9] of the night;
And we swam the floods, and we darnit[10] the woods,
Till we cam to the Lomond height.

[1] Allotted night. [2] Dull to the eye, thick. [3] Broom bush.
[4] Hemlock. [5] Fox. [6] Ringtail kite.
[7] Owl. [8] Darkest.
[9] A sudden change of temperature in the sensations of the individual, generally of heat; here, outwardly, spots of darkness denser to the eye than in other parts of the atmosphere.
[10] Threaded.

And when we cam to the Lomond height,
Sae blythlye we lychtid doune ;
And we drank fra the horns that never grew,
The beer that was never browin.[1]

Than up there rose ane wee wee man,
Franethe[2] the moss-gray stane ;
His face was wan like the coliflowre,
For he nouthir had blude nor bane.

He set ane reed-pipe till his muthe,[3]
And he playit sae bonnily,
Till the grey curlew, and the black cock flew
To listen his melody.

It rang so sweet through the green Lomond,
That the nycht-wind lowner[4] blew ;
And it soupit[5] alang the Loch Leven,
And wakinit the white sea-mew.

It rang sae sweet through the green Lomond,
Sae sweetly but and sae shill,[6]
That the wezilis laup[7] out of their mouldy[8] holis,
And danc'd on the midnight hill.

The corby craw cam gledgin[9] near,
The erne gaed veering bye ;
And the trout laup out of the Leven Loch,
Charmit with the melody.

And aye we dancit on the green Lomond,
Till the dawn on the ocean grew ;
Nae wonder I was a weary wycht
When I cam hame to you."

Still more impressive is the picture of the second night's work :—

"The second night, when the new moon set,
O'er the roaring sea we flew ;
The cockle-shell our trusty bark,
Our sails of the green sea-rue.

---

[1] Brewed. [2] From beneath. [3] Mouth.
[4] More stilly. [5] Swept. [6] Shrill.
[7] Leapt. [8] Earthy. [9] Looking asquint or slily.

And the bauld winds blew, and the fire flauchts flew,
And the sea ran to the sky,
And the thunner it growlit, and the sea dogs howlit,
And we gaed scouring bye.

And aye we mountit the sea-green hills,
Quhill we brushit thro' the cluds of the hevin ;
Than sousit downright like the stern-shot light,
Fra the liftis blue casement driven.

And when to the Norway shore we wan,[1]
We muntid our steeds of the wind,
And we splashit the flood, and we darnit the wood,
And we left the shore behinde.

. . . . . .

And when we cam to the Lapland lone,
The fairies war all in array,
For all the genii of the north
War keeping their holiday.

The warlock men and the weird women,
And the fays of the wood and the steep,
And phantom hunters all were there,
And the mermaids of the deep.

And they washit us all with the witch-water,
Distill'd fra the moorland dew,
Quhill our beauty blumit like the Lapland rose,
That wild in the forest grew." [2]

There is one other form of supernatural power which deeply influenced the life and feeling of the past in the Borders. This was the belief and expectancy on the part of the living of a return of the dead to earth. The Lowland Scot has always had a strong conviction that the grave formed no real break in the continuity of the essential life of man. He only passed from the visible

[1] Got to, or arrived at.

[2] *The Queen's Wake.* While preserving all the Scottish words in these extracts, I have not adhered to Hogg's affectation in the spelling, or rather misspelling, of modern words.

to the invisible, and might naturally take an interest in the affairs and in the people of the world he had left. Hence the simple unastonished realism with which all the ballads referring to a return from the dead are strongly characterised. This is manifest in the ordinary treatment which the spirits receive, and the preparations made for them after their return, as if they were still mortals merely come back for a season to the scenes of their temporary earthly pilgrimage. The ballad of *The Wife of Usher's Well* brings out all these points with striking emphasis. It was a daring wish, that of the bereaved mother, but it had its weird power:—

"'I wish the wind may never cease,
Nor fishes[1] in the flood,
Till my three sons come hame to me,
In earthly flesh and blood.'

It fell about the Martinmass,
When nights are lang and mirk,
The carline wife's three sons came hame,
And their hats were o' the birk.

It neither grew in syke nor ditch,
Nor yet in ony sheugh;
But at the gates of Paradise,
That birk grew fair eneugh.

'Blow up the fire, my maidens!
Bring water from the well!
For a' my house shall feast this night,
Since my three sons are well.'

And she has made to them a bed,
She's made it large and wide;
And she's ta'en her mantle her about,
Sat down at the bedside.

[1] Possibly fashes, or troubles.

Up then crew the red, red cock,
And up and crew the grey;
The eldest to the youngest said,
'Tis time we were away.'

The cock he hadna crawed but ance,
And clapp'd his wings at a',
When the youngest to the eldest said,
'Brother, we must awa'.

'The cock doth craw, the day doth daw,
The channering[1] worm doth chide;
Gin we be mist out o' our place,
A sair pain we maun bide.

'Fare ye weel, my mother dear!
Fareweel to barn and byre!
And fare ye weel, the bonny lass,
That kindles my mother's fire.'"

There is a fine touch of human continuity in the nature of the spirits as conveyed in the last two lines.

Scott caught up the conception of a return from the grave; and just because it had been made so powerful before, he was enabled, according to the law of poetic progress, to add to its impressiveness. In the *Eve of St John*—that type and forecast of what was grandest in his imaginative genius—he introduces the spirit of the dead—of the slain knight who was lying in his bloody grave; and with what terrible power! It is a return from the grave, not merely for purposes of awe and eeriness, but to rebuke lawless love, to sanction moral order and purity, to brand with supernatural sign the guilty hand, to tell also of the sacredness of human life, with all the impressiveness of one who had been admitted

[1] Fretting.

into the unseen world, and there learnt fully and intimately the eternal order of right and wrong—the certainty of a Power of Righteousness which the perplexing facts of this world tend, in some respects, to shroud in darkness and in doubt. The first scene—the meeting on the Beacon Hill of the lady with the knight whom she still supposed to be in the flesh—is entirely within the limits of the older minstrelsy:—

"My lady, each night, sought the lonely light,
That burns on the wild Watchfold;
For, from height to height, the beacons bright
Of the English foemen told.

The bittern clamoured from the moss,
The wind blew loud and shrill;
Yet the craggy pathway she did cross
To the eiry Beacon Hill.

I watch'd her steps, and silent came
Where she sat her on a stone:
No watchman stood by the dreary flame,
It burned all alone.

The second night I kept her in sight
Till to the fire she came,
And, by Mary's might! an Armèd Knight
Stood by the lonely flame.

And many a word that warlike lord,
Did speak to my lady there;
But the rain fell fast, and loud blew the blast,
And I heard not what they were.

The third night there the sky was fair,
And the mountain-blast was still,
As again I watch'd the secret pair,
On the lonesome Beacon Hill."

Then follows the passionate request of the lady for the

midnight meeting in her bower with the seemingly living knight. This scene is a mere appeal to the pictorial imagination on its strongly emotional side, to the feeling that springs from the thought of contact with the ghostly form of one returned from the dead; and the accessories of the situation are inexpressibly powerful. Except in artistic skill, Scott has not yet advanced beyond the sphere of the older minstrelsy. His picturing is more elaborate, but the older minstrels reached precisely the same effect by brief picturing and even single epithet. But the scene which follows, where the apparition appears in the lady's bower, and gradually reveals his true character, touches certain moral feelings which it was not within the sphere of the older writers to quicken in the heart, or at least embody in distinct expression. To a simple direct realism of treatment, which might suggest the moral feeling, but did not expressly convey it, Scott now adds a new element. He speaks out the lesson clearly and explicitly, and at the same time sacrifices nothing of imaginative impressiveness:—

"The lady looked through the chamber fair,
By the light of a dying flame;
And she was aware of a knight stood there—
Sir Richard of Coldinghame!

'Alas! away, away!' she cried,
'For the holy Virgin's sake!'
'Lady, I know who sleeps by thy side;
But, lady, he will not awake.

'By Eildon Tree for long nights three,
In bloody grave have I lain;
The mass and the death-prayer are said for me,
But, lady, they are said in vain.

'By the Baron's brand, near Tweed's fair strand,
Most foully slain, I fell;
And my restless sprite on the Beacon's height
For a space is doomed to dwell.

'At our trysting-place for a certain space,
I must wander to and fro;
But I had not had power to come to thy bower,
Had'st thou not conjured me so.'

Love mastered fear—her brow she cross'd;
'How, Richard, hast thou sped?
And art thou saved, or art thou lost?'—
The vision shook his head.

'Who spilleth life, shall forfeit life;
So bid thy lord believe:
That lawless love is guilt above,
This awful sign receive.'

He laid his left palm on an oaken beam,
His right upon her hand;
The lady shrunk, and fainting sunk,
For it scorch'd like fiery brand.

The sable score, of fingers four,
Remains on that board impress'd;
And for evermore that lady wore
A covering on her wrist."

These stanzas point to a very different conclusion, and contain a much higher strain of poetry, than do the verses, eerie and touching as they are, of *The Wife of Usher's Well.*

In *The Gay Goss Hawk,* a ballad of the Yarrow, we have the type of the romantic in both its forms. The gay gosshawk of the Scottish lord holds a colloquy with him, and carries a letter under its "pinion gray" to his sweetheart in the south. It does all for him that a creature endowed with supernatural power can do. And

then there is the stratagem of the lady—she drinks the sleeping potion, and lies for dead, after having requested to be carried to Scotland, and to be allowed to lie a night before burial in St Mary's Kirk. The test to which she is subjected by the step-mother is as rigid as could be conceived:—

"Then spak her cruel step-minnie,
'Tak ye the burning lead,
And drap a drap on her bosome,
To try if she be dead.'

They took a drap o' boiling lead,
And drapped it on her breast;
'Alas! alas!' her father cried,
'She's dead without the priest.'

She neither chattered with her teeth,
Nor shivered with her chin;
'Alas! alas!' her father cried,
'There is nae breath within.'"

After this she is carried for dead by her seven brothers up far from the southern land, on the oaken bier lined with silver, and amid a sweet soft music of bells hanging from her kell or shroud. And, according to her last request, she is laid for a night in St Mary's Kirk. Church bells had tolled for her, and masses had been said and sung along the way by which the bier had been borne. And there in St Mary's Forest Kirk she lay all night, white-robed for burial; but on the morn, when the dead-bell stirred the echoes of the hills, and when we can imagine sweet-faced maidens from the glens clustering round the bier of the marvellous lady from the south, touched with pity for one so young and fair, her

lover appeared to look upon the face of her who had died for him and would in death be carried to his, the land of the north. Then, suddenly, at the touch of his hand—

"She brightened like the lily flower,
Till her pale colour was gone;
With rosy cheik and ruby lip,
She smiled her love upon."

CHAPTER IV.

HISTORICAL BALLADS.

Of the Historical Ballads, the two which refer to the oldest historical times and incidents are *Auld Maitland* and *The Battle of Otterbourne*. *The Hunttis of Cheuet* may be taken in connection with the latter. The former, which was taken down from the recitation of the mother of James Hogg, expresses thoroughly the Lowland feeling of opposition and hatred to Edward I. of England. Notwithstanding the opinion of Aytoun and Maidment, that this ballad is a modern one, there seems to me to be sufficient evidence of its being in the main an old composition. It consists of two parts, the one describing the siege of Auld Maitland's tower, the other detailing the chivalrous and romantic exploits of his three sons against Edward's army in France. There is no historical incident on record which corresponds to either of the parts. But Maitland himself—

"Maitland with his auld beard gray"—

is a quite definite historical character, and his exploits are known to have been the subject of popular romance

long prior to the time of Gawain Douglas. He was laird of Thirlestane on the Leader in the thirteenth century, before and up to the period of the War of Independence. A Sir Richard Maitland disponed certain lands to the Abbey of Dryburgh in 1249. And the defence of his house against a band of Southerners at that period is quite a probable occurrence. The narrative of the ballad has all the directness, sense of reality, and pictorial power characteristic in general of the old and genuine historical ballads. What a picture is given in the single stanza, which describes the descent of the English upon the country:—

> "They lighted on the banks of Tweed,
> And blew their coals sae het,
> And fired the Merse and Teviotdale,
> All in an evening late."

That word *fired*, not burned, speaks of the glow of the flame as present to the very eye of the minstrel. And what an account of literalness and truth and of quiet heroism have we here:—

> "As they fared up o'er Lammermore,
> They burned baith up and down,
> Until they came to a darksome house,
> Some call it Leader-Town.
>
> 'Wha hauds this house?' young Edward cried,
> 'Or wha gies't ower to me?'—
> A gray-hair'd knight set up his head,
> And crackit richt crousely:
>
> 'Of Scotland's King I haud my house,
> He pays me meat and fee;
> And I will keep my guid auld house,
> While my house will keep me.'"

Then comes the siege, but the result of it all is :—

> "Full fifteen days that braid host lay,
> Sieging Auld Maitland keen,
> Syne they have left him, hail and feir,
> Within his strength of stane."

The exploits of the youths, though very bold, are of the usual sort in the days of romantic chivalry.[1] But the Lowland hate of the Southerner comes out in this verse. One of the young Maitlands has thrown young Edward to the ground, and he is offered three earldoms to let him free :—

> "It's ne'er be said in France, nor e'er
> In Scotland, when I'm hame,
> That Edward once lay under me,
> And e'er gat up again!"

The Hunttis of Cheuet, mentioned in *The Complaynt of Scotland*[2] (1549), is the older version of what was subsequently known as *Chevy Chace*. It was originally published by Hearne in his Preface to the *History of Gulielmus Neubrigiensis*[3] (1719). It is to be found in the *Reliques* of Percy, and in Child's *Ballads*.[4] We have, of course, reprints in the popular ballads of Scotland. Richard Sheale—a ballad-singer and ballad-monger in Elizabeth's time—put his name to it in the older prints. This means nothing beyond that he copied it. Mr Furnival says, "The fight of which the ballad tells is not known to history, except in so far as it's mixt up with the battle of Otterbourne, fought in 1388." It possibly did refer also to

[1] See the *Ballad*, in the *Minstrelsy*, i. 316.
[2] Murray's edition, 65.
[3] xxxii.
[4] vi. No. 162, 303.

another skirmish. There is much similarity in tone and structure, and several of the expressions, even lines and stanzas, are the same in both ballads. They may have been written by the same person, or, more likely, they are varying subsequent versions of one original ballad; but the incident of the hunting of the Cheviot is different from the story of *Otterbourne*. It was the carrying out of a vow made by "the Percy out of Northumberland" that he would hunt in the mountains of Cheviot—

"In the maugre of doughty Douglas
And all that ever with him be.
. . . . . .

This began on a Monday at morn,
In Cheviot the hills so hee:
The child may rue that is unborn,
It was the more pitỳ.

The drivers thorowe the woodès went,
For to raise the deer;
Bowmen bickarte upon the bent
With their broad arrows clear.

Then the wild thorowe the woodès went
On every sidè shear;[1]
Greyhounds thorowe the grovès glent
For to kill their deer.

They began in Cheviot the hills above,
Early on a Monnynday;[2]
By that it drew to the hour of noon,
A hundred fat harts dead there lay.

They blew a mort[3] upon the bent,
They sembled on sydis shear;
To the quarry then the Percy went,
To see the bryttlynge[4] of the deer."

---

[1] Clearly, entirely. [2] Monday.
[3] Sound of the horn at death of the deer.
[4] Cutting up and division.

But the joyous pastime was now to be interrupted, for the Douglas, Lord of Liddesdale and Warden of the Middle March, was descried not far off, and "with him a mighty meanyè" [1]:—

"They were twenty hundred spearmen good,
Withouten any fail;
They were born a-long by the Water of Tweed,
In the bounds of Teviotdale.

. . . . . .

The doughty Douglas on a steed,
He rode at his men beforne;
His armour glittered as did a glede;[2]
A bolder barne was never born."

Douglas, out of sympathy for the lives of his men, challenges Percy to settle the matter by single combat. Percy is willing, but their followers would not agree to this; and then the terrible conflict began,—Scottish spearmen against English archers. The fight grew closer:—

"The Englishe men let their bowys be,
And pulled out brands that were bright;
It was a heavy sight to see
Bright swords on basenets light.

Thorowe rich mail, and myne-ye-ple,[3]
Many sterne they stroke down straight;
Many a freyke[4] that was full free,
There under foot did light.

At last the Douglas and the Percy met,
Like to captains of might and main;
They swapt[5] together, till they both sweat,
With swords that were of fine Milàn.

---

[1] Meynè, company.
[2] A burning coal or brand.
[3] Many ply or fold.
[4] Man.
[5] Gave stroke for stroke. *Swap* still means to exchange.

These worthy freykès for to fight
Thereto they were full fain,
Till the blood out of their basenets sprent,
As ever did hail or rain."

The minstrel then goes on to narrate that Douglas was stricken mortally by an arrow. In Homer-like fashion he says:—

"It hath stricken the Earl of Douglas
In at the breast-bane."

Then the chivalry of the old times comes impressively out, showing the human heart under it all:—

"The Percy leanyde on his brand,
And saw the Douglas de;
He took the dead man by the hand
And said, 'Woe is me for thee.

'To have saved thy life I would have parted with
My landès for years three;
For a better man of heart, nor of hand,
Was not in all the north countrỳ.'"

Sir Hugh Mongon-byrry (Montgomery) then, to revenge the death of Douglas, "spended[1] his spear of trusty tree," and set upon Percy, whom he slew. Montgomery in his turn falls, pierced by an arrow. Still the battle raged:—

"This battle began in Cheviot,
An hour before the noon,
And when even-song bell was rang,
The battle was not half done.

They took on on either hand
By the light of the moon;
Many had no strength for to stand,
In Cheviot the hills aboon.

[1] Grasped in the span of his hand.

Of fifteen hundred archers of England,
Went away but fifty-and-three ; [1]
Of twenty hundred spearmen of Scotland,
But even five and fifty."

The minstrel towards the close of the ballad lays the scene of the conflict at Otterbourne—in fact, identifies it with this historical struggle. He also introduces the names of several men of consequence, who are mentioned in the other ballad. Sir Hugh Montgomery is in both ballads ; he is killed in *Chevy Chace,* and made a prisoner in *Otterbourne.* Douglas is slain in both ; and Percy is slain in *Chevy Chace,* while he is taken prisoner in *Otterbourne.* Lovel, Percy's standard-bearer, is slain in both. So is Sir John of Agerstone. The ballad which I have now quoted is the nearest approach we have to that which was known to Sir Philip Sydney, and to which his oft-cited words apply : "I never heard the Old Song of Piercy and Douglas, that I found not my Heart more moved than with a Trumpet ; and yet it is sung by some blind Crowder, with no regular Voice than rude Stile : which being so evil apparell'd in the Dust and Cobweb of that uncivil Age ; what would it work, trimm'd in the gorgeous Eloquence of Pindar ?"

It seems to me that these two ballads, *Chevy Chace* and *Otterbourne,* are derived from one and the same source,—an original ballad of Otterbourne, which we have lost, and the fragments of which we retain in those two broken versions. I think the original was a northern ballad. Subsequently it found its way to the south, and in the ignorance there prevailing about northern facts and incidents, it came to be recited as *Chevy Chace* and

[1] Other reading, seventy-and-three.

as *The Battle of Otterbourne.* The story of both would come under the head and name of *Chevachée,* which is doubtless the origin of the phrase *Chevy Chace.* This was the common and characteristic name for a raid on or across the Borders from either side, in and before the time of Edward I. and onwards.[1] It did happen, as a rule, that the *Chevachée* was on or through the Cheviots, but the word *Cheviot* has nothing to do with the origin of the phrase. *Chevachée* is the word expressed in *Chevy Chace,* and this ballad is mixed up with the incidents in *Otterbourne.* The ballad of *Chevy Chace* may indeed be taken as typical of a hundred Border raids; and its interest and value lie in the description, vivid and picturesque, of what an ancient raid was, when the leaders on both sides were chivalric men, and thus gave intimation of their intentions, practically throwing out a challenge of prowess. But it seems to me that this ballad of *Chevy Chace,* while it is mixed with the story of the conflict of Otterbourne, may possibly have referred to a not much known Border battle, which is mentioned by John Major under the name of Piperden, and which took place in 1436. Redpath gives us the more modern form as "Pepperden on Brammish, not far from the mountains of Cheviot."[2] According to Major, the Scottish leader was William Douglas, Earl of Angus, and with him were Adam Hepburn of Hailes and Alexander Ramsay of Dalhousie, Knights.[3] Redpath adds Alexander Elphinston of Elphin-

[1] See above, i. 319.

[2] Redpath, *Border History,* 277, ed. 1848. *Brammish* is now the Breamish Water, the main branch of the Till. The left-hand grain rises in King's Seat of the Cheviots; the right near Maiden's Cross.

[3] *History of Greater Britain,* 364 (Constable's ed.).

ston. "King Jamy" is referred to in *Chevy Chace*, and "King Harry" as the English king. These were all long after Otterbourne of 1388, and the reference shows that *Chevy Chace* was a late version of the story of Otterbourne, with a reference to the incidents connected with Piperden.

The Battle of Otterbourne is the grandest of Scottish ballads, alike in chivalry of action and in power of impression, through the simplest means. The incident it records is quite historical, and the antiquity and genuineness of the ballad itself are above suspicion.[1] In August 1388, James second Earl of Douglas made a raid into Northumberland, laid waste a great part of the district, and finally confronted Henry Percy, well known as Hotspur, in the New Castle where he lay. It is said that there, in a hand-to-hand encounter before the castle, as was the fashion of the times, the Douglas won the pennon[2] of Percy, and declared he would carry it as a trophy to his house of Dalkeith. Percy swore he should never accomplish that. The Scots under Douglas on their way northwards were overtaken by Percy, or, according to the account of the ballad, met by appointment, at Otterbourne. The field of Otterbourne lies well down in Northumberland, in the valley of the Reed Water, a tributary of the Tyne, about thirty-two miles north-west of Newcastle. It is about twelve miles south of the Carterfell and the

[1] See Percy's Notes to the older or English version of the poem in the *Reliques*. For the Scottish ballad see Scott, *Minstrelsy*, i. 345.

[2] The "pennon" seems on this occasion to have consisted of a pair of gauntlets fixed on the point of a lance. The gauntlets, which are gracefully embroidered in seed pearls, are now in the possession of the family of Douglas of Cavers, descended from Archibald, a son of the Douglas. The flag which is said to have been borne at Otterbourne by the Douglas, or perhaps taken from Percy, is also preserved at Cavers House.

Reedswire, where the water has its source. It is a famous spot even on those southern slopes and spurs of the Cheviots, which contain the scenes of more deeds of daring and personal prowess than any other locality in Britain.

The quiet hamlet of Otterbourne is the first the traveller meets with when, after crossing the Carterfell at the Reedswire, he passes down Reedsdale, which in all its features of hill and glen is another Yarrow. There is an English feeling about the small village as it lies sheltered and overshadowed by its stately trees, with the river passing behind it. No one would surmise that its summer peace had ever been broken by the fierce cry of conflict. The brook of Otterbourne crosses the road and passes through the village. Following the rivulet northwards one comes to a stretch of benty upland that extends from the Fawdoun Hill for two miles westwards, to a ridge that runs down to the present public road through the valley of the Reed. On that benty upland did the fight of Otterbourne rage through that August night till morning. The position of the combatants is distinct enough. Percy, after having lost his pennon before Newcastle, went straight to Alnwick, and there collected his men. He crossed Cocquet Dale and pushed onwards by the dark heights to the north-east of Otterbourne, intending to place himself between the Scots and the Border. And he succeeded in this. Descending from the Blake Law on the evening of the 15th of August, he found Douglas and his band on the slopes of Fawdoun Hill on the east side of the Otterbourne. Percy was now between them and their line of retreat up

through the Reed to the Reedswire. This rather indicates that the Scots were surprised, as is said in one version of the ballad. Though it was nightfall when Percy reached the ground, he commenced the attack at once by a shower of arrows from the English crossbows. At first the Scots were driven back, suffering severely. But, as the night advanced, the crossbowmen could take no accurate aim, and the fight became a hand-to-hand encounter. It continued all through the moonlit night until dawn:—

> "And the calm moon from heavenly height
> Leant down with gentle face,
> Saw fierce strife rage beneath her light,
> Yet spread o'er helm of outstretched knight
> A weird unearthly grace."

Gradually the Scots pressed their antagonists westwards in a line along the valley of the Reed. Fully a mile and a half from where the battle began, the Douglas fell. The spot is marked by what is inappropriately called "Percy's Cross," and it is now surrounded by a small plantation. But the real spot, and the one originally marked by the cross, was about seventy-three yards north-east of its present site. When Douglas fell, the Scots had driven their opponents on to, and nearly across, the western ridge of the moor, thus forcing their way onwards to the line of the Border. They finally succeeded, carrying Percy and his brother captive. The accounts as to the number of men engaged on both sides vary. But a recent discovery made at Elsdon Church, about three miles distant from the scene of conflict, may be regarded as throwing some light on the slaughter.

There skulls to the amount of a thousand have been disinterred, all lying together. They are of lads in their teens, and of middle-aged men; but there are no skulls of old men, or of women. Not improbably these are the dead of Otterbourne.

The opening of the ballad is very picturesque, and the mode of marking the time of the year could have occurred only to a native minstrel:—

"It fell about the Lammas tide,
When the muir-men win their hay,
The doughty Douglas bown'd him to ride,
Into England to drive a prey.

He chose the Gordons and the Græmes,
With them the Lindesays, light and gay,
But the Jardines wald not with him ride,
And they rue it to this day.

And he has burned the dales of Tyne,
And part of Bambrough shire,
And three good towers on Reidswire fells,
He left them all on fire."

Then there is the hand-to-hand combat at Newcastle, and the appointment to meet at Otterbourne:—

"They lighted high on Otterbourne,
Upon the bent sae brown;
They lighted high on Otterbourne,
And threw their pallions down."

The Douglas went into the fight with the memory of a dream of heavy omen, yet with undaunted heart:—

"But I have dreamed a dreary dream,
Beyond the Isle of Skye;
I saw a dead man win a field,
And I wot that man was I."

The English ballad thus finely and naturally describes the meeting on the field of Percy and Douglas:—

"The Percy and the Douglas mette,
That ether of other was fayne;
They schapped together whyll that they swette,
With swords of fine Collayne,[1]
Tyll the blood from their bassonets ran,
As the brooke doth in the rayne."

Just as day broke the Douglas received his death-wound; then there occur the following stanzas, which for power and simple pathos are unsurpassed in ballad literature:—

"'My nephew good,' the Douglas said,
'What recks the death of ane!
Last night I dreamed a dreary dream,
And I ken the day's thy ain.

'My wound is deep, I fain would sleep;
Take thou the vanguard of the three,
And hide me by the bracken bush,
That grows on yonder lilye lee.

'O bury me by the bracken bush,
Beneath the blooming brier,
Let never living mortal ken,
That e'er a kindly Scot lies here.'

He lifted up that noble lord
Wi' the saut tear in his ee,
He hid him in the bracken bush,
That his merrie-men might not see.

The moon was clear, the day drew near,
The spears in flinders[2] flew,
But many a gallant Englishman
Ere day the Scotsmen slew.

---

[1] Cologne steel. [2] Splinters.

The Gordons good, in English blood
They steep'd their hose and shoon;
The Lindsays flew like fire about,
Till all the fray was done."

The English version has preserved for us a brief picture of the sequel of the fight, which is the very heart of pathos:—

"Then one the morne they mayd them beeres,[1]
Of birch and haysell graye;
Mony a wydowe with wepyng teyres
Their makes[2] they fetch awaye."

Though the Douglas was "hid" 'neath the bracken bush, he was finally carried to Melrose, and there buried beside the high altar, with the banner which had been unfurled in the stour of many an onset drooping mournfully over him:—

"Full many a scutcheon and banner riven,
Shook to the cold night wind of heaven,
Around the screened altar's pale;
And there the dying lamps did burn,
Before thy low and lonely urn,
O gallant chief of Otterburne!
And thine, dark knight of Liddesdale!
O fading honours of the dead!
O high ambition lowly laid!"

If anything could add to the touching nature of those lines of the old ballad, it is a memorable incident in the life of Sir Walter Scott himself. After his strength was well broken, he, along with Lockhart, took a journey by Yair, Innerleithen, Peebles, and Drochil Castle on to Douglas, to see once more the ancient stronghold of the race "whose coronet often counter-

[1] Biers. [2] Mates.

poised the crown." He wished to depict it in *Castle Dangerous.* There, looking on the grand old ruin, a thousand memories rushed on his brain, and in tears he broke forth in the words of the dying Douglas—feeling, perhaps, that the soldier's case was his own:—

"My wound is deep, I fain would sleep;
Take thou the vanguard of the three,
And hide me by the bracken bush,
That grows on yonder lilye lee.

O bury me by the bracken bush,
Beneath the blooming brier,
Let never living mortal ken,
That e'er a kindly Scot lies here."

The other great historical ballad is *The Raid of the Reidswire.* The occurrence which it celebrates was a sudden outbreak between the two companies which attended the English and Scottish Wardens of the Marches, Forster of Bamborough and Carmichael of Hyndford, at a meeting on the Borders for the adjustment of claims. Forster and Carmichael came to high words regarding a bill which had been "fouled" or proved correct against an English freebooter. The fierce Borderers of Tynedale, noticing the altercation between the leaders, broke the truce by discharging a shower of arrows, when the combat became general. It ended in the retreat of the English party, Forster himself and others being taken prisoners. The date is June 7, 1575. The chief interest of the ballad lies in the curtness and picturesqueness of the story, and in the list of the names of the families engaged in it.

The *Fray of Suport* and *Jamie Telfer o' the Fair Dodhead* are the two ballads typical of a Border call and warning to follow the reivers when driving away the stolen cattle. Anything more fierce and savage in tone than the *Fray of Suport* can hardly be conceived. It is put into the mouth of a woman who had lost her all, and it seems as if her passions were so strong as to overleap all trammels of verse. A few lines will suffice:—

"But Peenye, my gude son, is out at the Hagbut-head,
His een glittering for anger like a fiery gleed;[1]
Crying—'Mak sure the nooks
Of Maky's-muir crooks;
For the wily Scot takes by nooks, hooks, and crooks.
Gin we meet a' together in a head the morn,
We'll be merry men.'
Fy, lads! shout a' a' a' a' a',
My gear's a' gane.

. . . . . .

Captain Musgrave and a' his band,
Are coming down by the Siller-strand,
And the muckle toun bell o' Carlisle is rung:
My gear was a' weel won,
And before it's carried o'er the Border,
Mony a man's gae down.
Fy, lads! shout a' a' a' a' a',
My gear's a' gane."

Jamie Telfer o' the Fair Dodhead tells its story with a sense of realism so strong as to suggest that it was the composition of an eyewitness of the retrieving foray. Jamie inhabited a lone tower—the Dodhead—near Singlee, on the Ettrick. The Captain of Bewcastle and his band beset it one night:—

[1] A glowing coal, or bar of iron.

"And when they came to the Fair Dodhead,
Richt hastily they clamb the Peel;
They loosed the kye out, ane and a',
And ranshackled[1] the house richt weel.

Now Jamie Telfer's heart was sair,
The tear aye rowing in his ee;
He pled wi' the Captain to hae his gear,
Or else revenged he would be.

The Captain turned him round and leugh,[2]
Said—'Man, there's naething in thy house,
But ae auld sword without a sheath,
That hardly now would fell a mouse.'

The sun wasna up, but the moon was down,
It was the gryming[3] of a new fa'n snaw,
Jamie Telfer has run ten miles afoot,
Between the Dodhead and the Stob's Ha'.[4]

And when he cam to the fair tower gate,
He shouted loud and cried weel hie,
Till out spak auld Gibby Elliot,
Wha's this that brings the fraye to me?"

But Elliot would not respond to the call. The plundered man then turned to the Teviot side. There he found sympathy in "auld Buccleuch," who thus spoke:—

"'Alack for wae!' quoth the gude auld Lord,
'And ever my heart is wae for thee!
But fye gar cry on Willie, my son,
And see that he come to me speedilie!

'Gar warn the water, braid and wide,
Gar warn it sune and hastilie!
They that winna ride for Jamie Telfer's kye,
Let them never look in the face o' me!

---

[1] Ransacked.
[2] Laughed.
[3] Sprinkling.
[4] Stobs Hall on the Slitterick or Slitrig.

'Warn Wat o' Harden and his sons,
Wi' them will Borthwick water ride;
Warn Gaudilands[1] and Allan Haugh,
And Gilmanscleugh and Commonside.

'Ride by the gate at Priesthaughswire,
And warn the Currors o' the Lee;
As ye come down the Hermitage Slack
Warn doughtie Willie o' Gorrinberry.'

The Scotts they rode, the Scotts they ran,
Sae starkly and sae steadily!
And aye the ower-word o' the thrang
Was—'Rise for Branksome readilie!'"

The Scots soon overtook Bewcastle, who refused to deliver up "the kye." Then there follows a picture set in the simplest terms, which no art can improve:—

"'Set on them, lads,' quo' Willie then;
'Fye, lads, set on them cruellie!
For ere they come to Ritterford,
Many a toom[2] saddle there sall be!'

Then til't they gaed, wi' heart and hand,
The blows fell thick as bickering hail;
And mony a horse ran masterless,
And mony a comely cheek was pale.

But Willie was stricken ower the head,
And thro' the knapscap[3] the sword has gane;
And Harden grat for very rage,
When Willie on the grund lay slane.

But he's taen aff his gude steel cap,
And thrice he's waved it in the air,
The Dinlay[4] snaws were ne'er mair white
Nor[5] the lyart locks of Harden's hair.

---

[1] Goldielands. [2] Empty. [3] Headpiece.
[4] A Liddesdale hill. [5] Than.

'Revenge! Revenge!' auld Wat 'gan cry;
'Fye, lads, lay on them cruellie,
We'll ne'er see Teviotside again,
Or Willie's death revenged sall be.'

O mony a horse ran masterless,
The splinter'd lances flew on hie;
But or they won to the Kershope ford,
The Scotts had gotten the victory."

The whole spirit of the old Border life is there, in its fidelity to clanship, its ready daring, its fierceness of fight and fence, its delight in romantic deeds, and, withal, in its heart of pathos. The power and truth of individual manhood were never more thoroughly tested than in the wild grips of a Border raid.

Objection has recently been made to the received view that the Dodhead of this ballad is on the Ettrick in Selkirkshire. The main ground is that Telfer, if living there, must have run thirty miles to reach Stobs.[1] It has accordingly been suggested that the reference is to a supposed Dodhead on the Dodburn, which runs down from between the Cauldcleugh Fell and Great Moor, and falls into the Allan Water, which joins the Teviot. The distance from the head of the Dodburn to Stobs is said to be some seven miles only. But it is not correct to say that the Dodhead near the source of the Dodburn in Ettrick is thirty miles from Stobs. In a line across the hills, which a Borderer would certainly take—especially in such an emergency—the distance as measured on the map is not more than eleven miles at the utmost. Further, no place or house called Dodhead is or has been known at the head of the Dodburn in Teviotdale. On

[1] See Child, *Ballads*, viii. 518.

the contrary, the pass at the head of this burn bears the name of the Hawkhass. There is, besides, no evidence of any peel or house of importance ever having been there, whereas there is proof of a tower having stood at the traditional place in Ettrickdale. Telfer, in running for Stobs across the moors, followed in the direction of the retreating reiver band, who were making for the pass at the head of the Teviot. Having reached Stobs, the other places of his call came in quite naturally—Coultart-cleugh and Branxholm. Catslockhill, between these two places, has evidently been confused with Catslack in Yarrow. There is a Catslack and Catslack Burn in Yarrow—there was a Catslack Peel—but there is no Catslackhill. The Catslockhill of the ballad has to be sought in some locality between Coultartcleugh and Branxholm, the name having now probably, as in many other cases, disappeared.

There are naturally ballads of rescue of clansmen taken prisoners, and lodged generally in the castle of what to them must have appeared rather ironically called "merrie Carlisle." These, curiously enough, all relate to personages connected with the notorious Debateable Land, for centuries a thorn in the side of England as well as Scotland. The activity, the rough deeds of the dwellers in this district, stirred the hearts of the older minstrels largely to graphic ballad portraiture. Nowhere else do we find the spirit of faithful clanship, or regard for the sacredness of a pledge, more strongly displayed than in the history of this rude and barbarous district. This is shown in the spirit of the ballads of rescue, in the feeling against the king for his treatment of Gilnockie, and in

the indignation of his neighbours against Hector of Harelaw, who, contrary to the faith of a Borderer, yielded up to the Regent the Earl of Northumberland after "Dacre's Raid" in 1569. This district demands a word of notice.

The Debateable Land extended from a line on the northern shore of the Solway to near the head of the Tarras Water. It was bounded on the east by the Esk as far as the Liddel Moat, and then by the Liddel on to near Greena Tower. It then ran north-west by the Tinnis Hill to the head of the Tarras Water. On the west it was bounded by the Water of Sark and the Pingle Burn. The boundary-line then ran eastward by the Irvine Burn until this joined the Tarras Water. The Tarras formed the northward boundary to the Perter Burn, where the district terminated. It contained the old parish of Canonbie, half of the parish of Morton, and the parish of Kirk-Andrews on Esk. The canons-regular of St Augustine had a priory and extensive lands in the parish of Canonbie. The Debateable Land was ten miles in length by four at its greatest breadth. The Esk ran right across it, and of old it was a district of wild bog and forest, with interspaces of bare or cleared land, so late as Sir Robert Carey's time, "a large and great forest on marshy ground." The Tarras Moss, with the barony of Harelaw, occupied the northern part; the towers of Gilnockie and Holehouse (Hollas, Hollows) were by the Esk; Bamgleis, Tower of Sark or Morton, Kynmont, Woodhouse Lee, lay in the centre; the Tower of Plomp and the Solway Moss, with the Roman Road running across it, the scene of the ignominious conflict of 1542,

filled up the space to the sea. Marshland studded with tangled wood, original forest, peat-bogs whose intricate paths were known only to the native moss-trooper, were environments which made the land a fitting stronghold of predatory habits and defiance of law. The power of the Warden of the March ceased when the rider got within the charmed circle of the Moss of Tarras. The Debateable Land was for several centuries the happy raiding refuge of Armstrong and Graham, its chief inhabitants. Once the former were assailed in this natural stronghold, but the attack was a failure. In 1588, Archibald, the ninth Earl of Douglas, accompanied by the king, made a raid on the Armstrongs. The earl destroyed their houses and pursued them into the Moss of Tarras. But the pursuit was wholly unsuccessful, and the earl had to follow the king, who had already gone back to civilisation, and leave the Armstrongs in their bogs. In these days one of the finest walks or drives in the south country is by the rough hill-road which leads across from Castleton by the moor and bridge of Tarras to Langholm in the haugh of the Esk. On a tranquil August day you pass amid the tall and deeply purpled heather on the slopes by the rocky valley down which the Tarras pours its dark and impetuous waters to the green haughs and fertile corn-fields of the Esk and the Glenzin; and the eye follows through the mid distance the far-gleaming ripples of the Solway, and rests on the massive outlines of Skiddaw and Helvellyn. Then when you have crossed the Tarras and got to the heights above Langholm, you exchange the dark brown and purple of the wild moorland for the grand openings in front and to

the right which disclose to the view the statuesque outlines and the wondrous greenery of the hills that flank the dales of the Wauchope and the Ewes.

There can be little question that the Debateable Land originally belonged to Scotland. Cumbria beyond it was long Scottish by right, and was not ceded to England until 1242. In the March Laws of 1249 the midstream of the Tweed and the Esk seems to be indicated as the frontier line, the Debateable Land lying on the Scottish side.[1] In the time of Edward I., Sir Baldwin de Wake was found on inquest at Carlisle to be heir of the barony of Liddal, situated partly in Cumberland, on the east side of the Esk.[2] De Wake had also the neighbouring barony of Kirk-Andrews within the Debateable Land. The barony of Liddal seems in De Wake's time to have included the parishes of Arthuret and Kirk-Andrews. The Scottish monarchs, however, both before and after this date, exercised rights of sovereignty over the property in the district. This was done by David I. and William the Lion. Robert Bruce conferred the barony of Kirk-Andrews, which had been in possession of Wake, on John de Soulis. In 1504 the whole district was claimed by the Commissioners as belonging to Scotland. In 1449 (15th November) the term Batable or Debateable is referred to as applied to the district. It is then spoken of as "Batable Landez or Threpe Landez."[3] It is still called the Debateable Land in 1549.[4] It has with

[1] *Leges Marchiarum, temp.* Henry III., § 11.

[2] *Berkeley Peerage Case,* cited by Mr T. J. Carlyle of Waterbeck in *Dumfries Society Transactions, Debateable Land* (1886), 19.

[3] See R. B. Armstrong, *Liddesdale,* i. 170.

[4] *Leges Marchiarum,* 80.

probability been supposed that the recognition by the monks of Canonbie of English supremacy in the form of a Writ of Protection from Edward III. in 1341, Wake's claim to Kirk-Andrews, and the disposal of the land by Scottish charters, led to a certain confusion, and gave rise to the ambiguous position of the territory and the term Debateable Land.[1] After various proposals for division, the district was allocated between England and Scotland in 1552,[2] Canonbie being given to the latter and Kirk-Andrews to the former. An earthen bank of some four miles, still known as the "Scotch Dyke," and running from a point on the Sark to the Esk, marks the line of division. Lord Wharton, in an order regarding the defence of the Marches, in the sixth year of Edward VI., 1553, refers to "the land layt called the Debateable Land, and now the King's Majestie's inheritance, well planted with men and fortress."[3] Yet after this, and so late as the time of Elizabeth in 1563, there is a proposal to divide the Debateable Land.[4]

The territorial lordship of the Debateable Land, at least of two out of its three baronies, Kirk-Andrews and Bryntallone, passed from the powerful family of Soulis with Hermitage to the still more powerful house of Douglas. On the fall of the latter—the black line—at Arkinholm, near Langholm, where on the western border they made their last stand, their possessions in this district passed to the Hepburns—Patrick, and then Adam, first and second Earls of Bothwell. This family again gave

[1] Cf. Carlyle, *loc. cit.*

[2] A note of expenses in connection with the division at this date is given in *Accounts of Lord High Treasurer*, vol. 1550-52.

[3] *Leges Marchiarum*, 342.

[4] *Ibid.*, 145.

place to the Maxwells, the powerful lords of Nithsdale. In the time of the Maxwells there rose up the Armstrongs, at first apparently independently, and then as vassals under bonds of man-rent. The name first appears in the Debateable Land in 1517.[1] By 1527-28 they had occupied, apparently at their own hand, large portions of the district, and they had built strong towers in face of the royal proclamation to the contrary (6th July 1528). They were a daring and powerful clan. We hear at this time and onwards of John the Laird, the famous Gilnockie; Thomas the Laird, John's elder brother, of Mangerton; Simon the Laird, of Whithaugh; Hector of the Harelaw; Jock o' the Syde; Geordie; and Will's Jock o' the Gingles; and Kinmont Willie. At the height of their power the Armstrongs could place 3000 horsemen in the field. Their last raid was into Cumberland on occasion of the death of Queen Elizabeth. Sir William Selby met and routed them. Immediately afterwards, numerous executions, the razing of their strongholds, and forfeiture of their lands, caused the extirpation of the clan. The Grahames shared with the Armstrongs the Debateable Land. Fergus Graham was laird of the Plomp, or Plump, south of the Armstrongs. His son Richard acquired Kirk-Andrews. From him are descended the Grahames of Esk and Netherby. Whatever private rights of property there may have been in the Debateable Land, it was certainly regarded as a common between England and Scotland. A specification constantly occurring in Articles of "Trewes" is that "all the Debateable Grounde should be used as common betwixt both the

[1] *Dumfries Society Transactions*, 36.

said realms, from the son rysing unto the son setting, with bytte of mouthe only."[1] Pasturing at night was thus prohibited.

These clans of the Debateable Land were to be found not only raiding indiscriminately into England and Scotland; they were ready on persuasion, or for revenge, to espouse the English or Scottish side equally on occasion of national war. In 1535, Mangerton and Whithaugh —both Armstrongs—were denounced as rebels for siding with the English. This was doubtless in revenge for the death of Gilnockie. Whithaugh was eventually caught and hung. In 1545, at Ancrum Moor, the Armstrongs, auxiliaries of the English, finding the tide of battle was against them, tore the emblem of the Red Cross from their breasts, which betokened their being assured Englishmen, and turned their spears on the Southrons, for whom in their heart they had no real liking. Their loyalty to a pledge did not on this occasion extend to the Southrons.[2] In 1592, we have a curious picture of the state of the Borders—of the eager-eyed armed watching for each other on the part of English and Scottish. It is entitled "The division of the severall charge of the West Borders of England and Scotland." From Carlisle to Bewcastle the English lay armed to the teeth. In Carlisle were the Warden, Lord Scroope, his Deputy, and Constable. Their function was "defence of England or offence of Scotland." In defence of England against "any sudden Rade or secret thifte made by any Scottes or

[1] Articles concerning the Monastery of Canobyholm, 1531.

[2] Burton, *History of Scotland*, and Carlyle, *Dumfries Society Transactions*, 38.

English borderers, to be ready upon the first showte of fraye, with a score at the least of the Warden's men, to follow where the fraye is, or to ryde betwixt them and home as the service requires. In offence of Scotland, when the Warden doth make any rade, to go with a competent number and take a boutie in Scotland. And that is called a Warden Rade." Then there are Stewards, Captains, and Bayliffs, in baronies, castles, and houses of strength westward from Carlisle, along the Eden towards the Water of Leven, and east and north-east to Spadeadam Waste and Bewcastle. Opposite the Leven, between the Esk and the Sark, lay the Debateable Land. This district, as we have seen, had been divided between Scotland and England in 1552; but the dwellers therein seemed even yet to acknowledge no allegiance either to England or Scotland. They "rode" impartially, as occasion prompted, into either country.

> "They stole the beeves that made them broth
> From Scotland and from England both."

The inhabitants of the Water of Leven appear to have been in the same condition. Further westwards "the best Grames" dwelt on both sides of the Esk, and owned no government except that of the English Warden, who had taken "band of four or more of the chief of them" to answer for the possible misdeeds of the clan. "This did make them alwaies fearefull to ryde into England. Now these Grames are not so dangerous to England as others are. But they ride still into Scotland. There is many of them."

Scotland, too, was in defence and offence. "The

governaunce of Scotland most offensive to England lyeth in two wardes in Annerdale [Annandale] and Lyddesdale." In Dunfoyse [Dumfries] lay the Warden, Lord Maxwell, his Deputy, and Sheriff. Then there was the Captain of Langam [Langholm], the Keeper of Annandale. This dale is strong "in great and many surnames," as Maxwells, Johnstons, Armstrongs, Irvines, Bells, and Carlells [Carlyles]. But "Lyddesdale is the most offensive country against the West and Middle Marches. It is governed by a Keeper, who lyeth in Armitage [Hermitage], the chief strength of Liddesdale. The Lord Bodwell [Bothwell] hath most land there. The strength of this country consisteth in two surnames of Armestronges and Elwoodes [Elliots]. These people ride most into Gillesland, Aston-More, and Northumberland." "Tywidale," we are surprised to learn, "never offends the West Border," and "Ewsdale are a civil people, and never ryde in England." The principal English borderers are the Grames of Eske and Leven, and "a surname of Stories, sore decayed." Then there are Fosters and Hetheringtons, Cuzers [Cosars], and Nixsons, also "sore decayed." Bells are in Gilsland; in Burgh are Lyddals, Glastes, Huntingtons, and Hodgsons, but not many. Musgraves and Salkelds are the greatest surnames of gentlemen within the Wardenry.

Then of the Borderers of Scotland, there are between Eske and Sark, in that grim Debateable Land, the "Johnsons of Greatney." Above them Kinmont and Armestrong, and about the latter "dwelleth a hundred able men, all Armestronges." The laird Johnson "dwelleth toward the meeting of Annan, at the water

of Mylke, and three hundred sufficient men of his name." Between the Annan and the Nith above Dumfries is "the Lord Maxwell and the Lord Harrys [Herries] and a thousand Maxwells under them. They have bin in feede [feud] with these Johnsons these many years, which is a weakening of Scotland and a strength to England." "In Lyddesdale the chief surnames are Armestrongs and Elwoods [Elliots]. The chiefe Armstrong is of Mangerton, and the chiefe Elwoode at Cariston. These are two great surnames, and most offensive to England at this daie, for the Armestrongs, both of Annerdale and Lyddesdale, be ever ryding."[1] All this was only thirteen years before the Union of the Crowns.

The chief of the ballads of rescue is *Kinmont Willie*, relating to Armstrong of Kinmont, who resided in Morton Tower, and who is said by Satchells to have been a descendant of Gilnockie. His rescue during the night from Carlisle Castle took place on April 13, 1596. There are, besides, the ballads that narrate the deliverance of the famous Jock of the Syde, and that of Archie of Ca'field, the latter from the Tolbooth of Dumfries. Jock o' the Syde is mentioned by Sir Richard Maitland in his invective.[2] He lived and, no doubt, "flourished" during the reign of Mary and part of that of James VI. He was an Armstrong, and nephew of the head of the name, the Laird of Mangerton. In 1569 he assisted the northern Lords—Northumberland and Westmoreland—to conceal themselves among the Border glens, after their

[1] Copy of a manuscript Tract addressed to Lord Burghley, A.D. 1590—with Platt or Map of the Borders taken in the same year. H. Ellis to Society of Antiquaries, 1827. The Report is signed "Edw. Aglionby."

[2] See *supra*, ii. 32.

unfortunate rising. His rescue from Carlisle Castle took place after 1590, when Thomas Lord Scroope of Bolton became, in succession to his father, Warden of the West Marches of England. Jock o' the Syde had two worthy relatives, as remarkable as himself in his profession—viz., his cousin, the Laird's Jock, or the Laird's son Jock, this being the son of Mangerton, and Christie of the Syde, his brother. These names all appear as men of note in the list of Border clans of 1597. The Syde was a tower in Liddesdale, a little way down from the junction of the Hermitage Water.

The ballads of rescue have a marked family likeness in structure and incident, and are probably due to the same author, one who lived in the time of James VI., and who wrote before the Union of the Crowns. The daring shown by Buccleuch in the rescue of Kinmont Willie spread his name over Britain and the Continent. It was held, besides, to be morally justifiable, on the ground that Kinmont had been seized on a day of Border truce, and was illegally detained. He was returning from a Warden Court held at the Dayholm of Kersope. It was pleaded by his captors that Kinmont interfered with a band of Englishmen who were pursuing some of his clan in Hot Trod, and that he thus deprived himself of the right of exemption from arrest on a day of truce. The Armstrongs and Buccleuch, the Keeper of Liddesdale, apparently thought differently. Buccleuch accordingly met the Armstrongs at Morton Tower, the residence of Kinmont, and with seventy mounted followers—not two hundred as asserted by Tytler—determined on a rescue. The arrangement of the expedition, the meeting of the

band at Woodhouselee an hour before sunset, the march through the night, the quiet breaking of the castle, the alarm in the city of Carlisle, the tolling of the bells and the beating of the drums there, with the successful carrying away of the captive and the recrossing of the flooded Eden in the dawn of the misty morning—are graphically touched, and make a stirring epic picture. And the whole is relieved by a touch of humour thoroughly characteristic of the bold life which delighted in a deed of daring and of danger, and found relief from the strain of the effort in the readiest joke. Kinmont Willie, fettered as he was, was hoisted on Red Rowan, "the starkest man" in Teviotdale; and while the rescue was still incomplete, thus spake Willie:—

"O mony a time, quo' Kinmont Willie,
I have ridden horse baith wild and wood,
But a rougher beast than Red Rowan,
I ween my legs have ne'er bestrode.

And mony a time, quo' Kinmont Willie,
I've pricked a horse out ower the furs;
But since the day I backed a steed,
I never wore sic cumbrous spurs."

The closing stanzas afford as fine a subject for a picture as any I know:—

"We scarce had won the Staneshaw Bank,
When a' the Carlisle bells were rung,
And a thousand men on horse and foot,
Cam wi' the keen Lord Scroope along.

Buccleuch has turned to Eden water,
Even when it flowed frae bank to brim,
And he has plunged in wi' a' his band,
And safely swam them through the stream.

He turn'd him on the other side,
And at Lord Scroope his glove flung he—
'If ye like na my visit in merrie England,
In fair Scotland come visit me!'

All sore astonished stood Lord Scroope,
He stood as still as rock of stane;
He scarcely dared to trew his eyes,
When through the water they had gane:

'He is either himsel' a deevil frae hell,
Or else his mother a witch maun be;
I wadna hae ridden that wan water
For a' the gowd in Christentie.'"

When delivered up by the weakest of Scottish kings to the Queen of England, for fear he himself should fall under the disfavour of the legal murderer of his mother, and his own prospects should thus suffer, Buccleuch made a speech worthy of his line and his country. "How did you dare," said the imperious queen, "to do such a thing?" "Dare, madam," said Buccleuch, "what would a man not dare to do?" It is creditable to the English queen that she recognised the character of the man, and set him at liberty. Turning to those around her, she is reported to have said, "With ten thousand such men our brother of Scotland might shake the firmest throne in Europe." Buccleuch's speech, grand as it is, may be paralleled by that of another Borderer, who was told off for a daring and lawless deed. "But what dae ye think o't?" was the query of the prompter. "Think o't," said the Borderer; "it's no the thinking that's onything; it is the daeing o't and the deein' for't!"

We have seen the part which Robert Lord Maxwell took in the death of Armstrong of Gilnockie. Always a

powerful family, the Maxwells were never greater than under his chieftainship and that of his son, Lord John Maxwell. Under the latter even the Johnstones—about the roughest riders on the Borders—the hereditary foes of the Maxwells, came under a bond of man-rent. But a raid of the Johnstones on the Crichtons of Nithsdale—the burden of the *Lads of Wamphray*, with its terrible doings and its lightsome turns, worthy of *The Gay Galliard* for whose death it records the revenge—broke up the alliance between the Johnstones and the Maxwells. The result was the conflict of Dryffe Sands (1593), in which Lord Maxwell fell—the hand of the wounded man being hewn off and borne as a trophy by Willie Johnstone of Kirkhill. Out of this somewhat foul slaughter, and other gruesome deeds, there grew up in the breast of the son of him who thus fell, also Lord John, a purpose of revenge as deep as it was persistent, which ruled his whole life and actions. At length, at a meeting arranged, as if for an amicable purpose, between Maxwell and Johnstone, at Auchnamhill near Arthorstane, in Dumfriesshire, the former, in a cowardly manner, fatally shot Johnstone through the back with, it is said, a poisoned bullet. This was on the 6th April 1608. The assassin fled to France, and the ballad, *Lord Maxwell's Goodnight*, was written on occasion of his departure, or between that period and 1613. The sympathy of his clan was with him in his exile, as was obviously also that of the writer of the ballad. It illustrates the peculiar view of blood atonement already shown to have been for so many ages characteristic of the Borderer, as the following stanzas show :—

"Adieu, madame, my mother dear,
But and my sisters three!
Adieu, fair Robert of Orchardstane!
My heart is wae for thee.

Adieu, the lily and the rose,
The primrose fair to see;
Adieu, my lady, and only joy!
For I may not stay with thee.

Though I hae slain the Lord Johnstone,
What care I for their feid?
My noble mind their wrath disdains—
He was my father's deid.

Both night and day I labour'd oft
Of him revenged to be;
But now I've got what lang I sought,
And I may not stay with thee.

Adieu! Drumlanrig, false wert aye,
And Closeburn in a band!
The Laird of Lag, frae my father that fled,
When the Johnstone struck off his hand.

. . . . . .

Adieu! Dumfries, my proper place,
But and Caerlavrock fair!
Adieu! my castle of the Thrieve,
Wi' a' my buildings there:

Adieu! Lochmaben's gate sae fair,
The Langholm-holm, where birks there be;
Adieu! my ladye, and only joy,
For, trust me, I may not stay wi' thee."

The exile returned to Scotland some years after this, but only to be taken and executed for his crime in 1613. But not quite for his crime, for the contemptible king had a favourite, Sir Gideon Murray, for whom he wished to provide. He had no estate ready; therefore fire-

raising was put in the dittay against Maxwell. This implied forfeiture of estate. Maxwell was thus conveniently disposed of, and part of his estate given to Murray, which, however, it is pleasant to record, he did not long hold. But for the Union of the Crowns, and the greater strength of the monarch which accrued from it, the head of the house of Maxwell would certainly have escaped the death penalty, as many an equally blood-stained Maxwell and Johnstone had done before him. We may look on the end of Lord Maxwell on the Castle-hill of Edinburgh as the close of the old period of individualism and lawlessness, and the beginning of modern respectability and order, very good in the main, but yet opening a century and a half which afforded an excellent cloak for the advancement in Scotland of a great many grasping knaves who, while destitute of scrupulousness, knew how to keep within the limits of law.

There are other two ballads of the historical type well worthy of being noted—*Edom o' Gordon* and *Parcy Reed*. *Edom o' Gordon* is one of those ballads the locality of which it is very difficult to determine. There are versions of it that refer to the north of Scotland—the house and the family of Forbes; to Loudon in Ayrshire, and the Campbells of that branch. Then there is a version which locates the incident in the place or house of Rhodes. This is near Duns in Berwickshire, there being still remains of the old tower. The Gordons were of course originally from Berwickshire, whence they carried to the north the names of Gordon and Huntlie; but before the supposed date of this ballad they had been long settled in Aberdeenshire. There is mention of an

"Adame off Gordoune," along with Stewart of Bonkle, both belonging to the Merse, in *The Bruce*,[1] and in all probability the same person appears on the Ragman Roll (1296) as Dominus Adam Gurdon, miles. This was the founder or an early member of the noble house of Gordon. After their settlement on the Dee, the Gordons retained a sort of territorial connection with the Merse in the way of feudal superiorities. But the Edom o' Gordon of the ballad is supposed to have been a later personage—viz., Adam Gordon of Auchindown, brother of the Lord Huntly of the time. Auchindown figured after the assassination of the Regent Moray as the queen's deputy-lieutenant in the north. He was not quite the coarse savage pictured in the ballad of Edom o' Gordon, but in the circumstances and temper of the times we can quite well suppose him capable of the atrocity attributed to him. It is but fair to say that in some of the versions of the ballad he is not alleged to be present at the burning of the tower. This is said to have been done by his lieutenant, a Ker or Car, obviously a Borderer of the savage type. The Lowland version of the ballad was printed by the brothers Foulis in 1755. It opens thus:—

"It fell about the Martinmas,
When the wind blew schrill and cauld,
Said Edom o' Gordon to his men,
'We maun draw to a hauld.

'And what an a hauld sall we draw to,
My merry men and me?
We will gae to the house of the Rhodes,
To see that fair lady.'

[1] V. 233.

She had nae sooner buskit her sell,
Nor putten on her gown,
Till Edom o' Gordon and his men
Were round about the toun."

Be the locality of the story in the Merse, at Loudon, or at Towie,—it seems to me to be one of the most natural and human-hearted ballads possible in the circumstances of the old wild life. Suddenly Edom o' Gordon surrounds the old tower with his men. The lady is alone, practically defenceless. She rushes to the tower-head, parleys with the assailant, and, like a noble-spirited woman, indignantly rejects his brutal terms. Then there is the threat of the assailant that he will burn the tower, herself, and her babies three. There is the treachery of Jock, her man, who, now in the pay of Gordon, pulls up the "ground wa-stane." There is the fire and the choking smoke—the cry of the youngest child to be free from "the worrying reek." Then there comes the terribly pathetic incident of the young dochter, "baith jimp and sma'." She asks—

"O row me in a pair of sheets
And tow me owr the wa'."

Surely the innocent face and form will evoke mercy even from Edom o' Gordon; but no—

"They row'd her in a pair of sheets
And tow'd her owr the wa',
But on the point of Edom's spear
She gat a deadly fa'.

O bonny bonny was her mouth,
And chirry were her cheiks,
And clear, clear, was hir yellow hair,
Whereon the red bluid dreeps!

Then wi' his speir he turned her owr ;
O gin hir face was wan !
He said, 'You are the first that e'er
I wist alive again !'

He turned her owr and owr again ;
O gin her skin was whyte !
He said, 'I micht ha' spared thy life
To been some man's delyte.

Busk and boon, my merrye men all,
For ill dooms I do guess ;
I canna luik on that bonny face,
As it lyes on the grass.'"

These singularly fine stanzas, revealing as they do the cruelty and the revulsion from it,—the eminently human regret and contrition for the sudden impulse to evil deed,—are among the truest to human nature in the whole circle of our ballad poetry. What more natural, and what more touching in the midst of the terrible murderous burning, than that the instigator of it should, after a climax of savagery in the slaying of the innocent girl, feel his heart touched to the core by the sight of the sweet reproachful face, and even wish, though in vain, that his hand had not needlessly and wantonly stilled for ever the hope and blossom of the young and beautiful life. If ever the old minstrel was true to the human heart, it was in stanzas such as these.[1]

It is possible that this ballad had originally some foundation in fact. Incidents of the kind related were unfortunately not uncommon. We have the burning of

[1] Yet it is of these verses that Mr Child writes as follows: "Then follow deplorable interpolations, beginning with st. 19. Edom o' Gordon having turned the girl over with his spear and wished her alive, turns her 'owr and owr again.'"—*English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 429.

Broomhouse Tower in the Merse, with its inmate, the lady of the place. Bishop Lesley writes: "Upoun the eist and myddill merchis, Sir Rauff Everis wes appointed livetennent lykwyse to invaid as he did crewellie be spulzeing and burning in divers places, not sparing to burne wyffis and bairnes in thair housses, bot ony mercy; as wes done at ane place in the Merse, callit the Bromehouse, and in sinder other places at the same tyme."[1] We have further the destruction by fire of the tower of Catslack in Yarrow, when the widowed lady of Buccleuch perished in the flames. There is also the well-known burning by Argyll of the house of Airlie, or rather of Forter Castle, up in Glenisla. The circumstance that the ballad is made in different popular versions to refer to various localities, may be accounted for by supposing that while it originally applied to one place, it was simply adapted in the course of recitation to the locality where it was sung or chanted, and where possibly an incident similar to what it records had taken place.

The scene of the ballad of *Parcy Reed* lies on the English side of the Border, not far from the Reed Swire. It is a characteristic illustration of old life on both sides of the Cheviots, and has all the spirit of the best minstrel poetry. Parcy or Percival Reed was laird of Troughhend. The tower in which he dwelt still stands in a ruinous state on the right bank of the Reed Water as you go down the valley to Otterbourne. He was apparently a man of consequence in his time, somewhere in the sixteenth century. In his official capacity he had dealt sharp justice on certain turbulent Crosiers, a clan in the

[1] *History of Scotland*, 187. Under the year 1544.

valley, and allied with the Halls of Girsonfield—the remains of whose melancholy and desolate homestead are still to be seen up on the moorland near the Otterbourne. The Crosiers, particularly the old man of the sept, did nothing meanwhile, but he and they nursed the purpose of revenge, quietly biding their time. At length, after a period of apparently peaceful relations, Parcy Reed was induced to join the Halls in a hunting party up amid the grassy wilds of the head of Reedsdale. His wife had had a prophetic dream of death and disaster to the family, but her husband would not be deterred by omens, so went to the hunting on the far-away moors. They had at first a joyous time, and all went well—except with the deer:—

"'To the hunting, ho!' cried Parcy Reed,
'The morning sun is on the dew;
The caller breeze frae off the fells
Will lead the dogs to the quarry true.

To the hunting, ho!' cried Parcy Reed,
And to the hunting he has gane;
And the three fause Ha's o' Girsonfield
Alang wi' him he has them taen.

They hunted high, they hunted low,
By heathery hill and birken shaw;
They raised a buck on Rooken Edge,
And blew the mort at fair Ealelawe.

They hunted high, they hunted low,
They made the echoes ring amain;
With music sweet o' horn and hound,
They merry made fair Redesdale glen.

They hunted high, they hunted low,
They hunted up, they hunted doon,
Until the day was past the prime,
And it grew late in the afternoon.

They hunted high in Batinghope,
When that the sun was sinking low;
Says Parcy then,—'Ca' off the dogs,
We'll bait our steeds and homeward go.'

They lighted high in Batinghope,
Atween the brown and benty ground;
They had but rested a little while
Till Parcy Reed was sleeping sound.

There's nane may lean on a rotten staff,
But him that risks to get a fa';
There's nane may in a traitor trust,
And traitors black were every Ha'.

They've stown the bridle aff his steed,
And they've put water in his long gun;
They've fixed his sword within the sheath
That out again it canna win.

'Awaken ye, waken ye, Parcy Reed,
Or by your enemies be taen;
For yonder are the five Crosiers
A-coming owre the Hingin-stane.'"

Parcy, finding himself thus treacherously used, calls upon the Halls to stand by him, but they excuse themselves, and will not help him. Then Reed upbraids them, as was their due:—

"O shame upon ye, traitors a'!
I wish your hames ye may never see;
Ye've stown the bridle off my naig,
And I can neither fight nor flee.

Ye've stown the bridle off my naig,
And ye've put water i' my long gun;
Ye've fixed my sword within the sheath
That out again it winna win."

Then the Crosiers have him in their power:—

"They fell upon him all at once,
They mangled him most cruellie;
The slightest wound might caused his deid,
And they hae gien him thirty-three;
They hacket off his hands and feet,
And left him lying on the lee."

. . . . . .

Then comes one of the most pathetic passages in all Border poetry:—

"It was the hour o' gloaming gray,
When herds come in frae fauld and pen;
A herd he saw a huntsman lie,
Says he—'Can this be Laird Troughen'?'

'There's some will ca' me Parcy Reed,
And some will ca' me Laird Troughen';
It's little matter what they ca' me,
My foes hae made me ill to ken.

There's some will ca' me Parcy Reed,
And speak my praise in tower and town;
It's little matter what they do now,
My life-blood rudds the heather brown.

There's some will ca' me Parcy Reed,
And a' my virtues say and sing:
I would much rather have just now
A draught o' water frae the spring.'

The herd flang aff his clouted shoon,
And to the nearest fountain ran;
He made his bonnet serve a cup,
And wan the blessing o' the dying man.

'Now, honest herd, ye maun do mair,
Ye maun do mair, as I you tell;
Ye maun bear tidings to Troughen',
And bear likewise my last farewell.

A farewell to my wedded wife,
A farewell to my brother John,
Who sits into the Troughen' tower,
Wi' heart as black as any stone.

A farewell to my daughter Jean,
A farewell to my young sons five;
Had they been at their father's hand
I had this night been man alive.

A farewell to my followers a',
And a' my neighbours guid at need;
Bid them think how the treacherous Ha's
Betrayed the life o' Parcy Reed.

The Laird o' Clennel bears my bow,
The Laird o' Brandon bears my brand;
Whene'er they ride i' the Border side,
They'll mind the fate o' the Laird Troughen'.'"

These stanzas are taken from the version reported by Mr James Telfer, schoolmaster at Saughtree in Liddesdale, as from the recitation of Kitty Hall, an old woman of Northumberland. They are not to be found *literatim* in the older version, which is of course much simpler,—even bald in narrative.[1] Clearly the original version has been added to, but it does not follow that all the stanzas were due to Telfer. He was a man of some genius, and he was in thorough sympathy with the older minstrelsy. It is likely, indeed it is alleged, that he retouched the ballad after it was recited to him. But it is not uncommon to find that lines and stanzas have been changed, even added, in the course of oral transmission. These reflected in a measure the spirit and feelings of successive generations; the ballads were thus frequently enriched by contributions from the hearts of the people themselves.

The Batinghope, referred to in this ballad, is a glen, green and solitary, leading up to high moorlands, that sends its burn down to the Reed Water, on the right

[1] See Child, *Ballads*, vii. 25.

hand, at the foot of the slope of the Reed Swire. The burn breaks and dashes here and there over craggy bits of crossing rock, and dips now and again beneath birks and fringing brackens, in shadow and sunshine. The monotone of the greenery of the hillsides and the wailing sough of the waters have a pathos that suits well with the memory of the fate of Parcy Reed; and the picture of the pale and stricken face of old story fuses readily with the softening fall of the autumn afternoon.

CHAPTER V.

HISTORICAL BALLADS: THE YARROW.

The ballads to which we have just referred have been found to relate to events of general historical interest, or to the details of Border raids and exploits. The interest of them lies mainly in action. But there is another class of ballads which, while they refer to incident more or less, yet derive their main interest and impressiveness from the tragic or pathetic emotion excited by the story. And, curiously enough, the ballads of this description which thrill us the most, and which have most widely and deeply stirred the souls of men in subsequent times, have their locality in one valley—that of the Yarrow—the stream of pathetic song. Rough and rude was the life there for many generations; but the blood-stains on its grassy holms have watered and nourished growths of sentiment so tender, so pure, so intense, as to be for ever a gain and a blessing to the human heart.

How the Yarrow has been the scene and the source of so much that is grand and touching in the older poetry of the Borders, is a question of great interest. That it has been so, not only through the accident of tragic and

pathetic incident, but also through the peculiarities of its natural scenery, fusing with the moods of mind that sympathise with this kind of incident, I hope to be able to show. Meanwhile let us glance at its ballads and songs.

Of the ballads and songs of the Yarrow of a pathetic type, there are four principal ones. They all apparently refer to real incidents. The oldest, which was first printed in *Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany* in 1724, is *Willie's Rare and Willie's Fair*. Pinkerton refers it to the period between James IV. and the reign of Mary. Then there are *The Douglas Tragedy*, *The Dowie Dens of Yarrow*, and *The Lament of the Border Widow*. The note struck in the first of these is that regret for the promise of happiness and that monotone of sadness which runs through all the pathetic poetry of the Yarrow. The burden of the song is the old story of a lost lover—lost, not through the violence of men as in *The Douglas Tragedy*, but by drowning in the Yarrow. The depth of passion conveyed is as wonderful as the simplicity of the expression:—

"Willie's rare, and Willie's fair,
And Willie's wondrous bonny,
And Willie hecht[1] to marry me,
Gin e'er he married ony.

Yestreen I made my bed fu' braid,
This night I'll make it narrow;
For a' the live-lang winter night
I'll lye twined o' my marrow.

O came ye by yon water-side?
Pu'd you the rose or lily?
Or came ye by yon meadow green?
Or saw ye my sweet Willie?

[1] Promised, or engaged.

She sought him east, she sought him west,
She sought him braid and narrow;
Syne in the cleaving of a craig,
She found him drowned in Yarrow."[1]

A ballad with a northern reference somewhat similar to this is given by Buchan,[2] and has been repeated with variations since his time. It is entitled *Willie's drowned in Gamery*. It has much more narrative than the Yarrow ballad—has in fact not much in common with it beyond a general scope, and seems very like an adaptation of it to a more recent incident. The remaining three were first given by Scott in the *Minstrelsy* (1802-1803). *The Douglas Tragedy* and *The Dowie Dens* both refer to the same kind of incident—the loss of lover or husband in mortal combat. The scene of the former is the glen of the Douglas Burn, which rises in the dark heathery heights of Blackhouse, and joins the Yarrow at the Douglas Craig. The lovers were fleeing by night from the Tower of Blackhouse, situated in this glen, whose ruins still remain, though in a painfully uncared-for and gradually vanishing condition. Blackhouse was a very old possession of the great house of Douglas. One of the family is commonly said to have sat in a Parliament of Malcolm Canmore at Forfar, as baronial lord of Douglas Burn. This Parliament is regarded as fabulous by Mr C. Innes.[3] But by charter of 1321-22, the forests of Selkirk, Ettrick, and Traquair

[1] Mr Palgrave prints a version with several additional stanzas. One of these, the finest, belongs to *The Dowie Dens*. The others, from their somewhat full references to the scenery, betray their comparatively modern origin.

[2] *Ballads of the North of Scotland*, i. 245.

[3] *Sketches*, 328.

were bestowed on the "good Sir James of Douglas." Whether or not the lady who fled from her father's tower was a Douglas, it is now impossible to say. But, if she were, this would account for the disparity in social rank between herself and her lover, at which tradition hints. The bridle-road across the hills, which the fleeing lovers are said to have followed, can still, to a certain extent, be easily traced. It is one of the main old Border roads or riding-tracks between the Yarrow and the Tweed. From Blackhouse Tower a line of hill-road passes up the Douglas Burn, then turns to the right into Brakehope, and at the Risp Syke, where "the Douglas Stones" are, it passes up the hill nearing the stones; then, keeping northwards, it follows the line of the Black Cleugh Burn, and parts into two on the east slope of Dunrig. One branch, though here much obliterated, passes along the south shoulder of the Dunrig (2435), and proceeding across the watershed of the Douglas, Glenrath, and Glensax Burns, and the ridge of the Fa' Seat —the highest of the hills in that wild district—it leads along the broad hill-tops by way of Hundleshope, or by Crookstone, to the Tweed at Peebles. The other, and here more distinctly marked, branch goes to the northwestwards, and right by the slopes of the Stake Law, at an elevation of about 1784 feet; and at the watershed, between The Glen and Glensax, it diverges into two lines — the one passing down "the Short Strands" to Glensax Burn, and thence down the valley to Peebles; the other, known as "the Drove Road," keeping along the Newbie heights till it, too, descends into the low ground and meets the Tweed at Peebles. From the

Douglas Stones, after the conflict with the father and seven brothers, the knight and his lady were making their way for the home of the former, and their path might have been either along the high line of Dunrig, or the lower slopes of the Stake Law, to Glensax. From these main lines various branches of roads diverge, each traceable still to the site of some ancient peel, with which it afforded a ready connection to the mounted Borderer.

The stones which are said to mark the scene of the fatal conflict are, however, obviously greatly older than any reasonable date which can be assigned to the story of the ballad; and instead of there being only seven, there are at least thirteen distinctly visible. The structure obviously belongs to the general class of stone-circles common on the Lowland hills, which might have been places of judicature, or worship, or burial, or all three. Still it is quite possible that in this, as in other instances, these ancient stones became the scene of a historical event.

To reach "the Douglas Stones," one has to go up the Douglas Burn, pass Blackhouse Tower, then follow the Brakehope Burn to the right. Into this burn on the left falls the rivulet called the Risp Syke. Ascend this to the top, and there, within about 400 yards from the sky-line of the hills, at an elevation of some 1180 feet, are situated the grey, weird stones. At first sight the appearance is that of a semicircle, with its convex facing you as you ascend the hill, and its base to the west towards the summit. In the line of the semicircle there are eleven stones, and within this line near the east side are two — making thirteen. Of these only four are now erect, the

others lying flat, but suggesting that they were originally upright. The height of the first or uppermost standing stone south is 2 feet 1 inch, of the one within the circle 3 feet 3 inches, of that on the north side, corresponding to the uppermost on the south side, 2 feet 7 inches. The longest flat stone, on the east, is 3 feet 9 inches. The length of the outer line of the semicircle is about 87 feet. Four of the flat lying stones are together on the south-east, suggesting that they had formed a low entrance. This is in the line of approach to the standing stone within the semicircle. Recently a drain has been dug, unfortunately quite close to the north line of the stones, and putting them in great danger. But this opening has revealed two flat lying stones in the line, as it were, of a continuous circle stretching up the hill; and there is another flat lying stone in the soft ground a little higher up, at a point which seems to indicate that there had been originally a complete circle. The diameter from this highest stone on the west to the lowest stone of the circular line on the east is 45 feet; and the diameter right across from north to south is 48 feet. On the largest flat stone on the east or lower line, and on the upright stone within the circle, there are six and four small hollows respectively, which might pass for cup-markings. They are probably simply natural hollows, as may be seen in stones laid bare by the floods on the sides of the burns, one excellent specimen of which is to be found in the burn that comes down from the Short Strands in Glensax on the opposite side of the hills. It should be mentioned that there is a circle of smaller-sized stones—amounting in all to eight—somewhat lower down the

hollow in which the Risp Syke flows; but I cannot gather that these have any title to be regarded as the traditionary Douglas Stones. They might almost be regarded as the foundation of a dwelling in the midst of soft ground. Excavation, a few years ago, showed nothing but natural soil below.

In the *Douglas Tragedy*, whatever be its historical value, we have a perfect concentration of picturesque and striking incidents. The flight of the lovers by night up the heights of Black Cleugh; the combat, in which the maiden's father and seven brothers are slain; the maiden stooping to stanch her father's wounds; the struggle between regard for her family and affection for her lover; the continued flight from those dead faces pallid on the knowe, and sadly shadowed in the soft moonlight,—are crowded into a brief intensity of impression. And then there is the still more tragic close of the whole:—

"He's lifted her on a milk-white steed,
And himself on a dapple grey,
With a bugelet horn hung down by his side,
And slowly they baith rade away.

Oh they rade on, and on they rade,
And a' by the licht of the moon,
Until they cam to yon wan water,
And there they lichted down.

They lichted down to tak a drink
Of the spring that ran sae clear;
And down the stream ran his gude heart's blude,
And sair she 'gan to fear.

'Hold up, hold up, Lord William,' she says,
'For I fear that you are slain!'
''Tis naething but the shadow of my scarlet cloak
That shines in the water sae plain.'

Oh they rade on, and on they rade,
And a' by the licht of the moon,
Until they cam to his mother's ha' door,
And there they lichted down.

Lord William was dead lang ere midnicht;
Lady Margaret lang ere day;
And all true lovers that gang thegither,
May they have mair luck than they."

The *Dowie Dens* is supposed to refer to a duel fought at Deuchar Swire, near Yarrow Kirk, between John Scott of Tuschielaw and his brother-in-law, Walter Scott, third son of Robert Scott of Thirlestane, in which the latter was slain.[1] According, however, to the version in the *Minstrelsy*, it would seem rather to be founded on the fact or tradition of Walter Scott being surprised and surrounded by a band hired by his brother-in-law to assassinate him. For brevity, directness, and graphic turn of narrative, vivid picturing, and the image of passionate devotion to the dead, there are few ballads in any language that match its strains:—

"Late at e'en, drinking the wine,
And ere they paid the lawing,[2]
They set a combat them between,
To fecht it in the dawing.[3]

'Oh, stay at hame, my noble lord,
Oh, stay at hame, my marrow;[4]
My cruel brother will you betray
On the dowie houms of Yarrow.'

'Oh, fare ye weel, my ladie gay,
Oh, fare ye weel, my Sarah!
For I maun gae, though I ne'er return
From the dowie banks o' Yarrow.'

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[1] *Minstrelsy*, ii. 370.
[2] Reckoning, bill.
[3] Dawning.
[4] Match, mate.

She kissed his cheek, she kaimed his hair,
As oft she had done before, O;
She belted him with his noble brand,
And he's away to Yarrow.

As he gaed up the Tinnies Bank,
I wot he gaed wi' sorrow,
Till, down in a den[1] he spied nine armed men,
On the dowie houms of Yarrow.

'Oh, come ye here to part your land,
The bonnie Forest thorough?
Or come ye here to wield your brand
On the dowie houms of Yarrow?'

'I come not here to part my land,
And neither to beg nor borrow;
I come to wield my noble brand
On the bonnie banks of Yarrow.'

'If I see all, ye're nine to ane,
And that's an unequal marrow;
Yet will I fight while lasts my brand,
On the bonnie banks of Yarrow.'

Four has he hurt, and five has slain,
On the bludie braes of Yarrow;
Till that stubborn knight came him behind
And ran his body thorough.

'Gae hame, gae hame, gude-brother[2] John,
And tell your sister Sarah
To come and lift her leafu' lord;
He's sleepin sound on Yarrow.'

'Yestreen I dreamed a dolefu' dream,
I fear there will be sorrow;
I dreamed I pu'd the heather green,
Wi' my true love on Yarrow.

O gentle wind that bloweth south,
From where my Love repaireth,
Convey a kiss frae his dear mouth,
And tell me how he fareth!

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[1] Hollow. [2] Brother-in-law.

Oh ! tell sweet Willie to come down,
And hear the mavis singing,
And see the birds on ilka bush,
And leaves around them hinging.

But in the glen strove armed men ;
They've wrought me dule and sorrow ;
They've slain—the comeliest knight they've slain—
He bleeding lies on Yarrow.'

As she sped down yon high, high hill,
She gaed wi' dule and sorrow,
And in the den spied ten slain men,
On the dowie banks of Yarrow.

She kissed his cheek, she kaimed his hair,
She searched his wounds all thorough ;
She kissed them, till her lips grew red,
On the dowie houms of Yarrow.

'Now haud your tongue, my daughter dear !
For a' this breeds but sorrow ;
I'll wed ye to a better lord,
Than him ye lost on Yarrow.'

'Oh, haud your tongue, my father dear !
Ye mind me but of sorrow ;
A fairer rose did never bloom
Than now lies cropp'd on Yarrow.'"

So far as regards the version of *The Dowie Dens of Yarrow* given by Sir Walter Scott, and now quoted, there is really very little certainty either as to the original lines or as to the historical reference. Sir Walter tells us that "this ballad, which is a very great favourite among the inhabitants of Ettrick Forest, is universally believed to be founded on fact. I found it easy to collect a variety of copies; but very difficult indeed to select from them such a collated edition as might, in any degree, suit the taste 'of these more light and giddy-paced times.'" We must therefore regard Scott's version

as a "collated edition." The material he had to work on was probably the different versions preserved at Abbotsford, and recently printed by Mr Child.[1] Certain it is, he did not succeed in giving a ballad with stanzas perfectly harmonious. It would have been better to have given even one purely untouched version, as it came from the mouth of an oral reciter.

Sir Walter's view as to the historical reference is obviously not well founded. His original opinion that the ballad referred to the slaughter of a Harden by the Scotts of Gilmanscleugh he afterwards abandoned as untenable. But there can hardly be anything worse than his references to what he calls "Annan's Treat," and the unhewn stones near Yarrow Kirk. These have nothing whatever to do with the incidents of any Yarrow ballad. The stones stood there long before a single deed in Scottish story had been done—were even then grey, weird, mysterious; and "Annan's Treat" is a pure misnomer, a reading of Scott's own, which has no foundation either in tradition or fact. Nor can we say anything more favourable of Sir Walter's final view regarding the historical personages of *The Dowie Dens*. This was that it indicated a duel fought at Deuchar Swire, near Yarrow Kirk, between John Scott of Tuschielaw and his brother-in-law, Walter Scott, whom he calls third son of Robert Scott of Thirlestane, in which the latter was slain.[2] This Walter Scott was certainly brother of Sir Robert Scott of Thirlestane of the time.

Mr Craig Brown, in his *History of Selkirkshire*,—most interesting and painstaking in its details,—disputes this

[1] *Ballads*, Part vii., No. 214.

[2] *Minstrelsy*, ii. 370.

reference. A duel certainly took place in 1609 between Walter Scott, brother of Sir Robert Scott of Thirlestane, and John Scott, a member of the family of Tuschielaw, in which Walter Scott was slain. This John Scott was clearly not the laird of Tuschielaw at the time. He is described in the Presbytery Records as "son lawful to Walter Scott of Tushilaw." But he was not the eldest son, as Mr Craig Brown describes him. Tuschielaw had other two sons — Robert and James — and Robert is repeatedly referred to in the *Privy Council Records* as "eldest son and heir-apparent of Tushilaw," and mention is made of his son Walter.[1] The duel is not specially indicated in the *Privy Council Records,* but there is reference to a "variance having lately fallen out" between the families of Thirlestane and Tuschielaw, and to the blood-feud in consequence of this (16th February 1609). This would place the duel early in that year. We know nothing of John Scott beyond his part in the duel. The record of Walter Scott of the Thirlestane stock, who fell in the duel, shows him to have been of a turbulent type. He was implicated along with his brother Robert of Thirlestane in an attack on the house of Adam Veitch in Fethan (called Fechene), near Traquair Church (6th June 1605), and he was one of a band who rescued a prisoner from the magistrates of Selkirk. But this John and Walter Scott do not seem to have been the personages referred to in the ballad. They were not brothers-in-law. The wife of Walter Scott of the Thirlestane stock was not a sister

[1] See *Privy Council Records* under March and April 1610.

of John Scott of the Tuschielaw family, but a daughter of Patrick Porteous of Hawkshaw. There was a son of this marriage—Patrick Scott of Tanlawhill—who became possessor of Thirlestane in 1641, when the representative of the older line surrendered the property. Further, the duel of 1609 seems to have been fought quite fairly. At least there is no imputation in the Presbytery Records of inequality of numbers, unfairness, or treachery as in the ballad. John Scott, the survivor of the duel, was summoned to compear before the Presbytery of Selkirk, February 7, 1609, to answer for the slaughter; but it was not until September 22, 1615, that he made public satisfaction in the church of Melrose for the deed. But clearly the duel and the circumstances of the persons do not fit into the story of the ballad. Mr Craig Brown suggests that the reference in the ballad is to an incident that happened several years after the duel of 1609. It appears that a Walter Scott of Tuschielaw eloped with a Grisell Scott of Thirlestane, a daughter probably of Sir Robert Scott. The elopement and marriage took place in the early summer of 1616. Walter Scott confessed it before the Presbytery, July 9 of this year. He and his wife were ordered to compear in church, and acknowledge the irregularity of their conduct. The blood-feud, originating in the duel of 1609, between Thirlestane and Tuschielaw was even yet unstanched, notwithstanding all the efforts of the Privy Council from that year onwards. The Moderator of the Presbytery was ordered to write to "the gudeman of Thirlestane, to desyr him to absent himself that day of

the said Walter Scott of Tushielaw his compearance, because of the dreadful feud that is amongis them." [1]

Walter and Grisell Scott had fled across the Border evidently, for they were married at Bellingham, in Northumberland. They had thus anticipated the exploit of Jock o' Hazeldean. They had crossed the Carterhaugh and gone down the Reidswire, straight on to the nearest point of safe matrimony,—Bellingham on the Tyne,—where they were duly married. But now comes a most ominous notice in the Presbytery Records. It looks as if their happiness had not been long lived. On October 22d of the same year (1616), Scott of Bonyntoun, his sons, and others of the name,—four in all, kinsmen and well-known allies of Thirlestane in his violent deeds, — were "summoned at the Kirk of the Forest to hear themselves excommunicat for the horrible slaughter of Walter Scott. Compeared not." [2]

Who was the Walter Scott thus horribly slaughtered? There were two Walter Scotts of note at the time. There was old Walter of Tuschielaw, and there was his grandson Walter, son of his eldest son and heir-apparent, Robert Scott. If of the Tuschielaw stock, he must have been one or other. I was fain to suppose at first that the youthful grandson had innocently eloped with Grisell of Thirlestane, gone across the hills to Bellingham, and, in face of the difficulties of family blood-feud, there got married happily. But then facts are too strong for this hypothesis. For we find that Walter Scott was "retoured" as heir of his father Robert in the

[1] Quoted in *History of Selkirkshire*, i. 313.
[2] *History of Selkirkshire*, i. 314.

lands of Tuschielaw and others in 1633; clearly not killed, therefore, in 1616. Could it, then, have been the hoary old reiver, the grandfather, laird of Tuschielaw, who so carried off Grisell of Thirlestane? If so, we can understand how the affront implied in this would be intensified by the feeling arising from the blood-feud already existing between Thirlestane and Tuschielaw. Here we have the old enemy of the Thirlestanes carrying off a daughter, who could not have been even half his age, — for he had been reiving, fighting, shedding blood since at least the year 1565, and this was 1616. He had been, in fact, contemporary of Robert Scott of Thirlestane, her father. This would strongly predispose the former family to resent the wrong implied in the carrying away of Grisell Scott by a Tuschielaw. It is curious that in Motherwell's version there is a reference to the reiving of the lady:—

> "Thou took our sister to be thy wife,
> And thou ne'er thocht her thy marrow;
> Thou steal'd her frae her Daddy's back,
> When she was the Rose of Yarrow."

An intelligible motive for the slaughter of Walter Scott is thus afforded, though it should be noted that a daughter of Thirlestane in Ettrick could not appropriately be called "the Rose of Yarrow." There is here some confusion of the Thirlestane incident with the Dryhope one.

Professor Aytoun's supposition that "the dispute was regarding some lands which old Tuschielaw intended to convey, or perhaps had conveyed to his daughter," is untenable, seeing the bride was not the daughter of

Tuschielaw but of Thirlestane. Then there is the superiority of numbers pitted against the victim—in the facts four, in the licence of the ballad, nine to one. There is the treachery implied in this, which is consistent with the idea of the lover or husband being run through from behind his back. There is, further, the circumstance of the husband going to Yarrow to meet his opponent, suggesting that he did not live there; and Tuschielaw is in Ettrick. Again, Bonyntoun or Bonnington, the residence of Scott, the assailant, is in Peeblesshire, on the other side of the hills from Yarrow. The Yarrow, as an intermediate valley between the Tweed and the Ettrick, would naturally be selected as the place of hostile meeting, if indeed it was not a planned conspiracy and surprise. Finally, there is the speech of the father of the bereaved wife, which distinctly suggests sympathy with the slaughter. These coincidences seem to outweigh the few minor discrepancies, as "Willie" for "Walter," and "Sarah" for "Grisell"—evidently an adaptation to the rhyme—though it is a mistake to suppose, as Professor Aytoun does, that Sarah was an exceptional name on the Borders. It is both ancient and common. Then Scott of Bonnington, though a kinsman of Thirlestane—nephew, in fact—was not his son, and therefore not brother-in-law of the slain man. It is quite likely, however, that the turbulent Bonnington was instigated to the slaughter by an incensed brother-in-law. He was the ready ally of Thirlestane in deeds of violence and bloodshed.

The only real objection I see to this view of the reference of the ballad to old Tuschielaw is the passionate

grief of the bereaved wife—the implication of the youth of the slain man:—

> "A fairer rose did never bloom
> Than now lies cropp'd on Yarrow."

This is not natural in a young woman, even though bereaved of a septuagenarian, and the lines are utterly inapplicable to a hoary-headed old reiver.

The lines in Scott's version of *The Dowie Dens,*—

> "Gae hame, gae hame, good brother John,
> And tell your sister Sarah,"—

would no doubt fit exactly the circumstances of the ballad, if there had been any proof of this relationship. But the facts are on the other side. The conclusion I come to is that Sir Walter Scott's version of the ballad has in itself no certain historical ground, but that the incident of the early or original ballad has been mixed up with ballads referring to the duel of 1609, and the general blood-feud relations between Thirlestanes and Tuschielaws.

It is just possible that the solution of this question may be found in the fact of another slaughter by a Scott of Tuschielaw—namely, John Scott, brother of Walter Scott, and uncle of John Scott the duellist of Deuchar Swire. This John Scott slew John (or James) Govan of Cardrona before 29th September 1601. He was denounced rebel, 29th January 1607, for not answering before the justice in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh for the cruel murder of John Govan of Cardrona, on letters of horning dated 29th September 1601.

This John Scott was married and had a son William.

We have no record of the name of his wife. John Govan also was married and had a son William. Could the wife of the latter have been a sister of John Scott of Tuschielaw? Accurate information on this point would probably settle the question of the main element of historical fact in the slaughter recorded in *The Dowie Dens*. It may be noted in this connection that in Principal Robertson's version the brother-in-law is John, and in the version of the ballad given from the recitation of Tibbie Shiel, the brother and the husband of the wife are both named John.[1]

These two well-known ballads of the Yarrow—viz., *Rare Willy's drowned in Yarrow* and *The Dowie Dens*—have presented several difficulties to editors, not only in respect of historical reference but internal consistency. The incongruity in the stanzas has been sufficient to mar the complete unity of each, and suggests the need of revision and removal.[2] Perhaps some light may be thrown on both ballads by a reference to a version of *The Dowie Dens*, different from that of Sir Walter Scott, which I was lately fortunate enough to recover.

The former ballad—*Rare Willy's drowned in Yarrow*—was printed for the first time in Allan Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724), where it consists of four stanzas. The first of these points distinctly to a maiden lover as the personage of the ballad, while the second stanza as clearly refers to a matron. They are as follows:—

[1] Child, viii. 522.

[2] This and what follows on these two ballads appeared in substance in *Blackwood's Magazine*, June 1890.

1.

"Willy's rare and Willy's fair,
And Willy's wondrous bonny,
And Willy hecht[1] to marry me,
Gin e'er he married ony.

2.

Yestreen I made my bed fu' braid,
This night I'll make it narrow;
For a' the live-lang winter night
I'll lie twin'd[2] o' my marrow."

The other stanzas, three and four, carry out the idea of the ballad as referring to a betrothed maiden. The ballad is repeated, as Ramsay gave it, by David Herd in his *Scots Songs* (1759 and 1776).[3]

The first indication in print of the ballad afterwards named by Sir Walter Scott *The Dowie Dens of Yarrow*, is found in Herd's *Scots Songs*.[4] This consists of four stanzas under the heading, "To the tune of *Leaderhaughs and Yarrow*." The lady who speaks throughout in those stanzas is obviously not a matron, but simply a betrothed maiden. Yet certain of the stanzas occur in Scott's ballad, first given in the *Minstrelsy* in 1802-3, and this ballad has clearly as its main import a reference to persons already married. In the tenth stanza, after the treacherous stroke, the dying man says:—

"Gae hame, gae hame, guid-brother John,
And tell your sister Sarah
To come and lift her leafu' lord,—
He's sleepin' sound on Yarrow."

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[1] *Hecht* is promised.
[2] *Twin'd* is, of course, parted or separated from.
[3] I. 82. [4] I. 145.

But the immediately following stanza suggests only a love relation between the two as betrothed persons:—

"Yestreen I dream'd a dolefu' dream,
I fear there will be sorrow;
I dream'd I pu'd the heather green,
Wi' my true love on Yarrow."

(In Herd it is, "the birk sae green.")

And with the same bearing comes next the stanza, almost unequalled in love poetry:—

"O gentle wind that bloweth south
From where my love repaireth,
Convey a kiss from his dear mouth,
And tell me how he fareth."

(In Herd, "from" is "to.")

These two stanzas occur in the fragment printed by Herd, and also the next one:—

"But in the glen strive armèd men,
They've wrought me dule and sorrow;
They've slain, they've slain the comeliest swain,—
He bleeding lies on Yarrow."

Scott, we may note, has changed one line here, and greatly for the worse. He writes:—

"They've slain—the comeliest knight they've slain."

Possibly it may turn out that the slain man was not a knight at all, and that the word "swain" was the only appropriate one. Clearly, at least, we have here three stanzas which do not naturally refer to the relation of husband and wife, but to that of betrothed lovers. The ballad of *The Dowie Dens* is thus, like that of *Willy's*

drowned in Yarrow, rendered inconsistent and incongruous.

Several attempts have been made to remove these incongruities, but not with complete success. Professor Aytoun has the merit of having seen the incongruity in *Willy's drowned in Yarrow*, and attempted to remedy it. He evidently holds that this ballad refers to a betrothed maiden, the death of whose lover was caused by drowning, not by violence; but he still retains in his reconstructed version the stanza beginning—

"Yestreen I made my bed fu' braid,"

which obviously points to a matron as the speaker. And in his version of *The Dowie Dens* he retains two of Herd's stanzas, already quoted, which as clearly can refer only to one in the position of a maiden lover.

It may be supposed that these two ballads refer to two different incidents,—the one, *Willy's drowned in Yarrow*, to a maiden deprived of her betrothed lover by the accident of drowning; the other to a wife whose husband was slain by her own kinsmen, and treacherously. But this difference of incident is far from conclusive. There is quite a possibility of uniting the two things,—death by violence, and the body being found in the stream. And little or no stress should be laid on the rhythmical ending of *The Dowie Dens*, in the repetition of the word Yarrow, as making it specifically different from the other ballad; for versions, especially the earliest, whether fragmentary or complete, are not at all uniform in this particular. But there is another explanation, and one which helps to remove the incongruities in the

two ballads themselves. This is to be found in the fact that there was an earlier ballad of the Yarrow than either that known as *Willy's drowned in Yarrow* or *The Dowie Dens;* that the stanzas given by Ramsay under the former head, and those given by Herd "To the tune of *Leaderhaughs and Yarrow,*" are simply portions, harmonious portions, of one, and this the earlier ballad; and further, that *The Dowie Dens* as given by Sir Walter Scott was a mixed, therefore incongruous, reference to the incident of the earlier ballad, and to a later incident in the relations of the families of Scott of Thirlestane and Scott of Tuschielaw.

This older ballad, now that it has been discovered, explains nearly everything. The heroine was really a maiden lover; her betrothed was slain directly by her brother in the course of an unequal combat; his body was thrown into the Yarrow, and there found by her; and any incongruity in representing her both as maiden and matron is explained by the mixing up of the later or Thirlestane incident with the earlier one. Here is the older ballad in full:—

1.

"At Dryhope lived a lady fair,
The fairest flower in Yarrow;
And she refused nine noble men
For a servan' lad in Gala.

2.

Her father said that he should fight
The nine lords all to-morrow;
And he that should the victor be,
Would get the Rose of Yarrow.

3.

Quoth he, 'You're nine an' I'm but ane,
And in that there's no much marrow;
Yet I shall fecht ye man for man,
In the dowie dens o' Yarrow.'

4.

She's kissed his lips and combed his hair,
As oft she'd done before, O,
An' set him on her milk-white steed,
Which bore him on to Yarrow.

5.

When he got o'er yon high, high hill,
An' down the dens o' Yarrow,
There did he see the nine lords all,
But there was not one his marrow.

6.

'Now here ye're nine, an' I'm but ane,
But yet I am not sorrow;
For here I'll fecht ye man for man,
For my true love in Yarrow.'

7.

Then he wheel'd round and fought so fierce,
Till the seventh fell in Yarrow;
When her brother sprang from a bush behind,
And ran his body thorough.

8.

He never spoke more words than these,
An' they were words o' sorrow:
'Ye may tell my true love, if ye please,
That I'm sleepin' sound in Yarrow.'

9.

They've ta'en the young man by the heels,
And trailed him like a harrow,
And then they flung the comely youth
In a whirlpool o' Yarrow.

10.

The lady said, 'I dreamed yestreen,
I fear it bodes some sorrow,
That I was pu'in' the heather green
On the scroggy braes o' Yarrow.'

11.

Her brother said, 'I'll read your dream,
But it should cause nae sorrow;
Ye may go seek your lover hame,
For he's sleepin' sound in Yarrow.'

12.

Then she rode o'er yon gloomy height,
An' her heart was fu' o' sorrow,
But only saw the clud o' night,
Or heard the roar o' Yarrow.

13.

But she wandered east, so did she wast,
And searched the forest thorough,
Until she spied her ain true love
Lyin' deeply drowned in Yarrow.

14.

His hair it was five quarters lang,
Its colour was the yellow;
She twined it round her lily hand,
And drew him out o' Yarrow.

15.

She kissed his lips and combed his head,
As oft she'd done before, O;
She laid him o'er her milk-white steed,
An' bore him home from Yarrow.

16.

She washed his wounds in yon well-strand,
And dried him wi' the hollan',
And aye she sighed and said, 'Alas!
For my love I had him chosen.'

17.

'Go hold your tongue,' her father said,
'There's little cause for sorrow;
I'll wed ye on a better lad
Than ye ha'e lost in Yarrow.'

18.

'Haud your ain tongue, my faither dear,
I canna help my sorrow;
A fairer flower ne'er sprang in May
Than I ha'e lost in Yarrow.

19.

'I meant to make my bed fu' wide,
But you may make it narrow,
For now I've nane to be my guide,
But a deid man drowned in Yarrow.'

20.

An' aye she screighed and cried, 'Alas!'
Till her heart did break wi' sorrow,
An' sank into her faither's arms,
'Mang the dowie dens o' Yarrow."

In thus producing for the first time an additional version of the ballad of the Yarrow, I may be properly asked to give my ground and authority. This I readily do. The version is due to the memory and the care of an old man in Peeblesshire, now deceased, who was a worthy type of what is best in our fast-decaying old-world character—its simplicity, homeliness, and steady uprightness. The late William Welsh, Peeblesshire cottar and poet, as he was wont to designate himself—being the author of a volume of poems and tales relating to local topics—gave me the poem, of which the above is an exact copy. I knew the old man well. He was,

when I first became personally acquainted with him, above seventy years of age, but hale, healthy, and in perfect possession of his faculties, shrewd, acute, and much above the common. For several years he paid me an annual visit. I had great pleasure in his conversation —genial, humorous, pawky. He moralised as only a Scotsman can; but his epigrammatic flashes kept his sententiousness from being prosy. He wrote out for me the version of the ballad as I have given it, stating very explicitly that it was from the recitation of his mother and grandmother. I questioned him closely on the point, but to this statement he steadily adhered. I asked him to give me answers to certain questions in writing, which he did. The ballad, he said, was recited by his mother, —his grandmother had a copy of the same in her father's handwriting, and thus the poem came down to him. As dates are of importance in a case of this sort, I got from him a statement in writing in answer to questions on those points, and also other corroborative particulars. These are to the following effect:—

Robert Welsh—great-great-grandfather of W. Welsh —was born about 1686, died 1766. He farmed Faldonside, near Abbotsford, well known as once the property of the Ker who held the pistol to Mary's bosom on the night of Rizzio's slaughter. His son married Janet Lees, from Galashiels, who was born 1726, died 1789. Their son married Margaret Yule, who was born at Falahill, in Heriot, in 1761, and died in 1819. William Welsh himself was born at Heriot Tower, 6th May 1799, and left it in 1819. "The grandmother," William Welsh writes, "had a fine ear for music, and had a copy

of the song in her father's writing (queer crooked letters), which Mr Haig, the schoolmaster of Heriot, could read fluently, and called it the Queen Anne's hand. He transcribed it into the modern style, and gave a copy to my mother (who was also very musical) for the sake of [I suppose he means in place of] the old manuscript. I kept Haig's copy till it got into pieces, and was lately burnt when cleaning the house."—(Letter, 14th February 1878.) This would take the MS. of the ballad back at least to the early part of last century. William Welsh adds the following: "An old woman, a mantua-maker, whose name was Marion Tod, and whose house I frequented often when a boy of seven years, sung it exactly the same way; and many youngsters came to hear auld Gifford, as they called her, because she came from thereabouts, sing the *Dowie Dens o' Yarrow.* Once, when I was a young man, I was singing it to a young lass and an old maid; and when I had done, I turned up the young one's head, which was hanging very low, and saw the tears on her cheeks; and the old one, looking serious, said, 'Poor man! I could ha'e likit him mysel'.'"—(Letter, 14th February 1878.) If these statements are even generally correct — and I see no ground to doubt them, even as to details—this version of *The Dowie Dens* is older than the earliest printed fragment by Herd, and probably as early as *Rare Willy's drowned in Yarrow*, first printed by Ramsay in 1724. Sir Walter Scott's version is confessedly a compilation; Motherwell's, taken from the recitation of an old woman in Kilbarchan, is still later. All this points to the conclusion that we have in the version now offered the

oldest, probably the original, ballad of *The Dowie Dens of Yarrow.*

This conclusion is strengthened, if we look to internal evidence. The whole tone and frame of this ballad are from beginning to end simple, uniform, consistent—a unity of narrative feeling. The stanzas which in the other two ballads are incongruous find here their natural place. There is ample, intelligible motive for the slaughter of the lover. He is no knight or noble lord, as in Scott's ballad, but an ignoble person—"a servan' lad in Gala." This base personage has dared to fall in love with a daughter of Scott of Dryhope,—one of the most ready freebooters on the Border,—the laird of those glens of Dryhope and Kirkstead that run up through varied heather and bracken sheen to the Blacklaw and the heights of Glenrath—Hopes which now we love and prize for matchless charm, for gleam and murmur of burn, for solitary birk that drapes the seldom-visited linn pool—Hopes which the reiver cared for, because they could conveniently conceal, say, four hundred kine taken from Bewcastle Waste on the English side. More than all, this love is reciprocated: the daughter of Dryhope finds some manliness, some nobility in the "servan' lad in Gala," who may possibly never have ridden in a reiver's band. This surely was an out-of-the-way lass in those times, with some strange modern notions worthy of the evolution of the two hundred years that followed. But her brothers do not at all like this sort of arrangement —"a servan' lad in Gala" forsooth! Here is a motive for his being put out of the way at once ere he marries their sister,—tenfold more powerful in those times than

any question about dower, or even hatred from blood-feud. For this latter motive did not prevent marriages between families, even while blood-feuds were unstanched. Witness Kers and Scotts, and Peeblesshire alliances many. In corroboration it may be noted that in two of the versions given by Mr Child since the above sentences were written, the hero is "a servant lad in Gala," and in one derived from Mrs Richardson (Tibbie Shiel), he is "a ploughboy lad in Yarrow."[1] These references are all from versions near the locality,—Melrose, Innerleithen, and Yarrow itself. This inequality of rank is pointed to in one at least of the versions:—

"I'm wedded to your sister dear,
Ye coont me nae your marrow;
I stole her frae her father's back,
And made her the flower of Yarrow."[2]

Then here comes the romance part of the affair—the fitting explanation of how the incompatibility of circumstances was to be dealt with. And this is how the minstrel pictures it. The father of the lady, hopeless of breaking down her love, proposes that the "servan' lad" should fight the nine lords—that is, lairds, for lord means no more than this,—simply, at the utmost, lord of a barony—who are suitors for his daughter's hand. She is called "the Rose of Yarrow"; and while this phrase does not occur in Scott's version, it is to be found in the West Country one—from Kilbarchan—given by Motherwell.

"The Rose of Yarrow" was to fall to the victor, who

[1] Child, vii. 172, 173; viii. 522. [2] *Ibid.*, vii. 165. Murison MS.

in this case was not the least likely to be the "servan' lad." He, however, accepts the unequal conditions. Then he slays seven of his opponents; and as the seventh fell he is treacherously run through "from a bush behind" by the brother of his love, who apparently was an interested spectator of the unequal contest. The lover sends a dying message to his lady-love. Then comes a stanza, not in Scott's version, but happily congruous with the whole story. The man who is now down on the field is not a knight, only a servant — one of base degree; hence he gets no knightly treatment, not even decent human regard; his lot is only shameful indignity:—

"They've ta'en the young man by the heels,
And trailed him like a harrow,
And then they flung the comely youth
In a whirlpool o' Yarrow."

Then the lady has the ominous dream about

"Pu'in' the heather green
On the scroggy braes o' Yarrow."

"Scroggy braes"—quite true, not on the "dowie houms." There is no heather there, — only the waesome bent which, bowing to the autumn winds, makes them dowie; but on the "scroggy braes" there it is now, as any one may see. But "scroggy" is better than all. This expresses exactly the look of the stunted trees and bushes on the braes of Yarrow—two and a half or three centuries ago, when the forest was decaying—such as only a native minstrel could have seen or felt. "The scroggy braes,"—this was never said before in Scottish ballad or minstrel song,—yet it is so true and so ancient!

Her brother reads her dream for her,—tells her bluntly enough, not sympathising with her, or caring for her feelings, to

"Go seek your lover hame,
For he's sleepin' sound in Yarrow."

There is surely a touch of the direst irony here,—the dead man,—beloved,—"sleepin' sound." She sets out in search of him, and then there comes a stanza which, supposing this ballad to have been known in the early part of last century, as it probably was, obviously suggested to Logan the verse in his ballad of Yarrow which Scott prized so highly, and which sets Logan higher than any other thing he is known to have written. The stanzas in the original, as now for the first time printed, are—

"Then she rode o'er yon gloomy height,
An' her heart was fu' o' sorrow,
But only saw the clud o' night,
Or heard the roar o' Yarrow.

But she wandered east, so did she wast,
And searched the forest thorough,
Until she spied her ain true love
Lyin' deeply drowned in Yarrow."

In Logan's poem, which appeared in 1770, we have these lines, which are simply those of the old ballad, and which must be regarded as a mere copy, supposing the ballad to have been floating on the memories of people so early as I represent it:—

"They sought him east, they sought him west,
They sought him all the forest thorough;
They only saw the cloud of night,
They only heard the roar of Yarrow."

That Logan was a plagiarist there is, I fear, other proof.

The maiden, searching, finds her dead lover in the water. He had been violently slain, and then brutally thrown into the stream. This is the reconciliation of the *dénouement* of the two ballads, *Willy's drowned in Yarrow* and the modern *Dowie Dens.* The stricken man lay in the

> "Cleavin' o' the craig,
> She fand him drowned in Yarrow."

Then there comes a stanza not found in Scott's version —picturesque, touching, complete in itself—such as painter might limn, and, doing it well, make himself immortal:—

> "His hair it was five quarters lang,
> Its colour was the yellow;
> She twined it round her lily hand,
> And drew him out o' Yarrow."

What a picture!—the lass wading, it may be, into the water, grasping the floating yellow hair, twining it round her lily hand,—how despairingly, yet how fervently,—clasping it, the last tie amid the moving stream, and drawing him tenderly out of the water flow to the river bank, where at least he would unmoved lie,—be, though dead, her own.

Though there is nothing in Scott's version corresponding to this, there is a stanza in Motherwell's, but it is a bad version. It is not his but her own hair which is spoken of, and she manages to draw him out of the stream by this!—

> "Her hair it was five quarters lang,
> 'Twas like the gold for yellow;
> She twisted it round his milk-white hand,
> And she's drawn him hame frae Yarrow."

There can hardly be a question that the original version is much more natural and appropriate, as referring to the hair of the dead lover, lying in the water. "The milk-white hand" is certainly that of the lady, not the man. Then the simple drawing him out of the stream by the hair, the putting him on her milk-white steed, and bearing him home from Yarrow, is a representation infinitely superior to the coarse idea of "drawing him hame frae Yarrow" by his locks, as pictured in Motherwell's version.

Then there is the solution of another incongruity. Stanza 19 is obviously the original of the second stanza in *Willy's drowned in Yarrow*, where as it stands it has no relevancy whatever. Here it is in a form that is perfectly natural and appropriate. "I meant," says the maiden lover,—

> "I meant to make my bed fu' wide,
> But you may make it narrow,
> For now I've nane to be my guide,
> But a deid man drowned in Yarrow."

How thoroughly superior to the incongruous stanza of *Willy's drowned in Yarrow!* Not—

> "Yestreen I made my bed fu' wide,"

but—

> "I meant to make my bed fu' wide,
> And you may make it narrow."

You, if not the slayer of my lover, yet the sympathiser with the assassins!—do as you choose with me. The guide of my life is gone; the light is cast out with the "deid man drowned in Yarrow."

The stanza (16) which contains a reference to the

"well-strand"—the rivulet flowing from the spring—her washing his wounds therein, and drying them "wi' the hollan',"—is very true, natural, and touching. It is thoroughly Scottish in feeling, fact, and diction. Has one not heard of "the well-strand,"—"the meadow well-strand,"—from one's boyhood? And "the hollan'" we know well. All through those old times, down to the middle of the eighteenth century, the brown linen made out of the flax in Scotland, and made largely, was sent across to Holland—Haarlem especially—to be bleached. There it was dipped in lye and buttermilk; and after six months, from March to October, returned to this country, pure, clean, and white. The damsel wished to honour her dead lover, as best she might, with the purest in her gift. It was what she wore in her joy:—

> "Her kurchy was of Holland clear,
> Tyed on her bonny brow."

With regard to the historical reference of the original ballad, I confess I can say very little. If it really concerns a daughter of the house of Dryhope, as it seems to do, this would bring the date not further back than the middle of the sixteenth century, when the forest-stead of Dryhope was given to a Scott. It is quite probable, of course, that the same family might have been there long before, simply as keepers for the Crown of the forest-stead. In the alleged residence of the lady at Dryhope,—in the phrases, "the fairest flower in Yarrow," "the Rose of Yarrow,"—we have a distinct suggestion of "the Flower of Yarrow"—that is, Mary, rather Marion Scott, daughter of John Scott of Dryhope, not Philip, as Sir

Walter Scott puts it, who was married to Wat of Harden in 1576. It seems to me possible, even indeed probable, from those references—the first, the oldest yet ascertained—that the ballad may actually refer to Mary Scott, the "Flower of Yarrow." This incident may have been an episode in her life that took place previously to her marriage with Scott of Harden. There must have been associations with this woman of quite a special kind, apart simply from the ordinary occurrence of her marriage with a neighbouring Border laird and reiver, which led to the intense, widespread, and persistent memory of her that has come down to our own day. This of course would imply that the falling into the father's arms, which fitly concludes the ballad, did not mean the conclusion of her career. The terminations of ballads of this class are usually in the same conventional style. And probably "the Flower of Yarrow" was no exception to the run of her sex in having more than one love experience.

The probability of the view now given seems to me to be strengthened by the unsatisfactory nature of the historical references adduced by Sir Walter Scott in illustration of the ballad, and of other suggestions made since his time. The duel on Deuchar Swire must be set aside as having no direct bearing on the circumstances; and certain important particulars of the narrative cannot be explained by supposing the ballad to refer to the "Walter Scott of Tuschielaw" who eloped with Grisell Scott of Thirlestane in 1616, and who is assumed to be the Walter Scott slaughtered shortly afterwards by Scott of Bonnington and his accomplices. I think it probable, however, that these later incidents may have come to be mixed up with

the earlier in popular tradition and song, and thus with the story and the fate of the "servan' lad in Gala." Hence the double reference in Scott's ballad, confessedly a compilation from different versions.

The Lament of the Border Widow, and the circumstances in which it originated, have already been noticed in connection with the social life of the district.[1] There is no more touching wail of grief in all our Scottish poetry. Some doubt has been raised regarding its genuineness as an old ballad. Parallel lines, even similar stanzas of other songs, have been quoted, and it has been supposed by some to be a composite or cento of different ballads. On this I wish simply to say that we know so little of the way in which these old strains have been transmitted to us, and oral transmission is so peculiar, that not much importance is to be attached to coincidences in lines and stanzas. Although, moreover, those other ballads were even the first printed, it does not at all follow that they were the older or the sources of the borrowing. The story of *The Lament* is in itself a complete thing, and quite different from the story of those other ballads referred to. And this at least is true, that no parallels can be found for the three most touching stanzas — four, five, and six, or for the exquisite line—

"And happ'd him wi' the sod sae green."

This certainly may be allowed, that the song does not refer to the death of Piers Cockburn, whose tomb is by the burn that breaks down over the Dhu Linn, beside

[1] See *supra*, ii. 19, 20.

the ruins of the old tower of Henderland. This tomb is as old as the early part of the fifteenth century. Possibly the song touches the fate of some later member of that family of Cockburn, once so powerful and so turbulent on the Borders. It may even refer to William, the fifth laird, who, however, was not executed at his own door, but beheaded in Edinburgh (1530).[1] Cockburn is a name which, like so many others that dominated the Borders, has now disappeared from the roll of Border landed men, and is only to be met with, and that rarely, on solitary tombstones in deserted graveyards. The romantic ballad of the Yarrow, *The Gay Goss Hawk*,[2] and the very remarkable historical one, *The Sang of the Outlaw Murray*,[3] have also been noticed in their places. Some doubt has been sought to be thrown on the historical character and reference of the incidents in *The Sang of the Outlaw Murray*. It may, however, very fairly be taken as referring to John Murray, eighth laird of Philiphaugh, who obtained a royal charter of the sheriffship of Selkirkshire in 1509 from James IV., after having exercised the functions without royal mandate.[4] James Murray, tenth of Philiphaugh, was Keeper of the Forest, and resided at Newark, the custodier's castle. It was this James, or his son Patrick, who fell at a later period under the hand of Buccleuch, or his henchman Scott of Haining. Buccleuch thus got possession of Newark and the Wardenship of the Forest.

The power of these old strains lies mainly in this—

[1] See *supra*, ii. 19. [2] See *supra*, ii. 126. [3] See *supra*, ii. 14.
[4] The other alternative is William de Moravia, an earlier personage. See above, i. 295.

that they indicate in the simplest, readiest words the realism, the power, the pathos of our primary human emotions, — deepest love, saddest sorrow, unflinching courage, and noble self-sacrifice. This was what touched the heart of Scott, purified and inspired him, and made him ashamed of eighteenth-century conventionalism.

> "And pity sanctifies the verse
> That paints by strength of sorrow,
> The unconquerable strength of love,
> Bear witness, rueful Yarrow."

CHAPTER VI.

THE POETRY OF THE BORDER — INFLUENCE OF THE SCENERY—THE LOVE-SONGS AND GENERAL POETRY.

"THE Scottish Ballad Minstrelsy," says Mr Hill Burton, "ranges over and engrosses every element of poetry except the religious or devout. . . . The minstrelsy is rich in all that picturesquely associates itself with the shades as well as with the lights of the national life. We have the great crimes, with their harvest of remorse and retribution. War is there, with its patriotic devotion, its heroism, and triumphs on the one side; its calamities and desolation on the other. Love, of course, with all its romantic variations, is abundant. Superstition enters with its horrors, but it is also sometimes borne on the wings of an exquisite fancy, yet so wild and wayward that one cannot see what æsthetic law or theory can justify it, and yet it pleases."

This statement is fair enough, but it is not sufficiently qualified. "Every element of poetry" is certainly too wide an expression to be quite applicable. We have but few traces in the older Border poetry, or ballad minstrelsy in general, of a direct feeling for nature in its

softer or more beautiful side, and an exceedingly modified recognition, if any at all, of its grander or sterner side. There was no tarrying sympathy with, or full description of, the scenery of the district, whether dark-browed hill and unfathomed glen, or the soft pastoral knowes and green haughs of the waters. The face of nature, be it mild or stern, as in itself an object of poetic interest, did not strike the older minstrels of the south of Scotland. And of nature as the symbolism of human life and feeling we have no trace whatever.

Neither side of nature was, however, unfelt. The influence of the softer side, at least, was strong but indirect. It was somehow in the heart of the poet; but it lacked full and definite expression. This is shown in frequently recurring stanza or epithet, that indicates a loving feeling for a place or a natural object. The tower stands "quite pleasauntlie"; the outlaw's castle is "feir to see"; and, what it was impossible not to feel in the sternest time, the birk was "bonnie," and the notes of birds pleasing.

There is one feature in particular of the Border landscape which, from the frequent notice of it in the ballads, appears to have been strongly impressed on the feeling of the time. This is conveyed in the expression which is commonly applied to a stream—*the wan water*. That *wan* as so employed is an adjective of colour there can be no doubt, though originally the verb *wan* or *wane*, as applied to water, meant to *ebb* or *decrease*, as in the expression *Tha wætera wanodon* (the waters were waning). *Wan* in composition means defect, and as an adjective in Anglo-Saxon it means defect of strength, *feeble*, or deficiency in brightness, *pale, livid, dusky*. *Wan*, thus

indicating colour, was an epithet applied to water in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and from it came down into the mediæval romances and the Scottish ballads. Thus Syr Bedevere saw

"Nothynge
But watres depe and waves wanne."[1]

In the English version of the later *Morte d'Arthure* we have the following: "What saw thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but the waters wap and the waves wan." Here *wap* is obviously a verb meaning to strike against the shore, and *wan* is probably also the verb meaning to ebb or wane. There is thus evidence of a twofold application of the word. But in the Scottish ballads *wan* is constantly applied to a stream or running water in such a way as to exclude the idea of ebbing, and to imply the adjectival sense of pale or dusky colour. The pure running stream is, in the poetry of most nations, an emblem of life, of brightness, and cheerfulness. And I rather think that the phrase—*the wan water*—is peculiar to Saxon and to Scottish poetry. The question arises: What is the origin of the application of the epithet to the Border streams, and whence the frequency of its use? Is it true to natural appearance? We know well that those streams are as bright, pure, and sparkling as are to be found anywhere. They are, in fact, remarkable among streams for these qualities. There is hardly a glen in the Lowlands which is without its burn or streamlet, and, be the sides of the glen rich in pastoral green or flushing full in the purple beauty of the heather-bloom, the burn, by its

[1] *Le Morte Arthur.*

bright links, now hurrying in stream, now resting in pool, gives light by its gleam and life by its music and motion to the pastoral solitude. Our later poets have universally felt and given expression to this pleasing aspect of our streams. But the feeling of the older minstrels, as conveyed in *the wan water*, is not less true to nature and natural appearance than is the brighter aspect of the same object. Let any one walk across a Border moorland on one of those days not uncommon in the district, when, overhead and all around, the sky is shrouded by grey clouds, peaceable and motionless, piled in masses high and imposing. As this is generally in late autumn, let him notice also that the bent is brown and the heather-bloom beginning to fade, and that the grey tint on the sky is helped by the same colour on rock and stone, and then let him watch the effect of this on pool and stream, and he will feel and understand the force, truthfulness, and beauty of the expression—*the wan water*. The stream, which was formerly bright and sparkling, has taken on the tint of the landscape around it, and we feel that it now touches the eye and heart with its wan look. The older minstrels noted aspects of the scenery of this description; and they did more, they instinctively fused these with the story in hand, or with some turn in it. This particular look, for example, of the stream is introduced with wonderful effect into several of the historical ballads. It occurs in *The Douglas Tragedy*, already quoted. And mark its peculiar appropriateness. The hero of the ballad has carried off his love after a deadly conflict, in which the father and brothers of the maiden fell. The hero and his love ride slowly across the hills

between the Yarrow and the Tweed, amid a quiet sheen of moonlight all over the vague weird-like moorland; the father and brothers are lying dead in the deep glen of the mountain burn which the lovers have left behind them. The companion of the maiden begins to feel that he too has carried with him a wound—in fact, his death-wound—from the conflict. The dying man finds it necessary to rest, and the minstrel with a wonderful touch tells us:—

"O they rade on, and on they rade,
And a' by the licht of the moon,
Until they cam to yon wan water,
And there they lichted doun."

Where more appropriately could a dying man, with fading hope and sense, have rested than by the "wan water"?

In the ballad of *Lord William* we have the not uncommon story of disappointed love and revenge, in this instance on the part of the lady. The body of the lover whom she had secretly and subtly slain was concealed for, as the ballad says, "three quarters of a year." It proceeds:—

"Then she cried on her waiting maid,
Aye ready at her ca',
There is a knight into my bower,
'Tis time he were awa'.

The ane has ta'en him by the head,
The ither by the feet,
And thrown him in the wan water,
That ran baith wide and deep."[1]

Every one must feel that there is a singular appropriate-

[1] *Minstrelsy*, ii. 243.

ness between the dread act here narrated and the scene suggested to the sense by the

"Wan water,
That ran baith wide and deep."

The fixing on this feature of the surrounding circumstances, a feature that harmonises with the action, is poetic art in one of its simplest yet most powerful forms.

There is one other reference of this sort, which is too striking to be passed over. A mournful summons has come to one who has been compelled to abandon for another the sweetheart he yet loves. And we are told:—

"Sad Willie raise, drew to his claes,
Put on him hose and shoon,
And he's away to Annie's bower,
By the lee licht of the moon."

The writer of these lines certainly felt the power of the fusion of the lee or lonesome light of the moon with the feeling in the heart of the lover.

The power of the flooded stream was a feature of the Lowland country not likely to pass unfelt by people and singer. It has been referred to occasionally with fine poetic effect.

In the *Mother's Malison* or *Clyde's Water* there is the account of a young man who resolutely holds by his purpose of riding to see his sweetheart in the evening or night. His mother is opposed to it, and finding expostulation fruitless says:—

"O an ye gang to Meggie's bower,
Sae sair against my will,
The deepest pot in Clyde's water,
My malison ye's feel."

Then we have two stanzas of scenery and emotion on the way:—

"As he rode ower yon high, high hill,
And doun yon dowie glen,
The noise that was in Clyde's water
Would feared five hunder men.

'O roaring Clyde, ye roar ower loud,
Your streams seem wondrous strang;
Make me your wreck as I come back,
But spare me as I gang.'"

Those stanzas seem to me to be both truthful and touching. The power of the sound of water as it reached his ear on the hill, over the dowie glen, is an instance of impressive reproduction; and the prayer in the second stanza is characteristic of true and intense passion.

There is another phrase which is very common, and which strikes one as indicating truly an almost constant aspect of the landscape. This is "the bent sae brown." From the ballad of Thomas the Rhymour onwards, all through the poetry of the Borders, this phrase occurs:—

"But he wasna on his berry brown steed,
Nor twa miles from the town,
Till up it starts these three fierce men,
Among the bent sae brown."

It is that aspect of the uplands with which men living there, and spending most of their life in the open air on the high stretches of the southern moorlands, were daily familiar. For, with the short exception of some weeks in July and August, when it is in delicate pearly flower, the bent or hair-grass of those Border hills is "brown," at first a deep, rich, golden brown, which, in the sunlight of a late autumn day, makes broad spaces of unspeakable

splendour amid the dark and fading heather. And then, growing to a paler hue, it yet keeps its place, amid the wild winds of winter, tossed, torn, and dishevelled, until the late spring or summer renews the cycle by the fresh shoots of another brief period of green life.

But these are wholly incidental touches; they are given simply in passing. The minstrel never tarries on the features of the landscape as worthy of direct attention, or as objects that call for description by themselves. This absence of direct poetic dealing with mere nature is not certainly peculiar to the Border minstrels. The sympathy for it was through many centuries but occasional, and very imperfectly developed in Scottish poetry.

If the softer side of nature was but incidentally noticed, the sterner side fared still worse. All along, from the time of James I. of Scotland downwards, there was not in the poetic south, or indeed anywhere else in Scotland, an imaginative sympathy for the wild and grand in nature as it is presented, for example, at the head of Talla, or Loch Skene, at the head of Manor, or the Douglas Burn. This side of things seemed rather to repel than to attract even imaginative men during these years down to near our own time. There are several considerations which might be adduced to account for this; but at present it is sufficient to say that men had not got over the original feeling of fear or dread which is inspired by the wild and savage scenes of the world; and, until the impressive in nature ceases to be merely dreadful to us, we cannot feel it to be either grand or sublime. Fear, instead of being the soul, is the very death of imaginative passion. It requires to be faced, or

utterly overcome, before we can realise the placid feeling of the beautiful or sublime. Hence men in Scotland for several hundreds of years turned away from the poetical aspect of the grander side of things. As a specimen of this kind of antagonism to wild nature, I may refer to Dr Alexander Pennycuik, author of *The Description of Tweeddale*, published in 1715: "This country is almost everywhere swelled with hills, which are, for the most part, green, grassy, and pleasant, except a ridge of bordering mountains, betwixt Minchmuir and Henderland, being black, craigie, and of a melancholy aspect, with deep and horrid precipices, a wearisome and comfortless piece of way for travellers."[1] Why, this very ridge of mountains contains some of the most impressive scenery of the district, and is just the walk which a man would choose who has a soul in him that can be quickened by natural beauty and grandeur, or awed by solitude.

Compare with this statement of Dr Pennycuik, the following, written only a few years after his was published, by a Borderer also: "I am just returned from a Highland expedition, and was much delighted with the magnificence of Nature in her awful simplicity. . . . Plain corn countries look as if men had made them; but I defy all mankind put together to make anything like the Pass of Killiekrankie."[2] There was soul in this writer, but she was Mrs Cockburn, authoress of one of the versions of *The Flowers of the Forest.*

Yet if we look at the whole course of Border poetry, we shall find that the scenery of the district in which it grew up has had a marked influence over it. There can

[1] *Description*, 45—ed. 1815. [2] *Songstresses of Scotland*, i. 106.

be no doubt that the wilder and grander scenes of the Border country helped very much to nourish that stern, war-loving spirit which issued in the exploits celebrated in the ballads—a spirit shared in by people and by bard alike. And the scenes of nearly all the most powerful and striking of the historical ballads are laid in the wilds around the heads of the Teviot and the Reed, and in the dark recesses of the mosses of the Tarras and the Liddel. This might arise a good deal from situation, as being near the turbulent tribes of the Reed and the Tyne, on the south side of the Cheviots, and the places, therefore, peculiarly of strong and stirring incident. But it is also remarkable that the scenes of the most tragic and pathetic ballads and songs are to be found on the soft green braes of Yarrow, while the strains of the most tender of the love-songs first burst on the ear in the grassy and wooded haughs of the Tweed. When we come to speak of the poetry, in fact, the songs of the Tweed, which sprung up only about the middle of the seventeenth century, we shall find them marked almost exclusively by tender sentiment, dashed with a soft pathos. But, on the whole, the feeling is one of joy, chastened and subdued. Somehow, in the poetry of the Yarrow, be it ballad or song, there is a deeper tinge of sorrow, often a very dark colouring, an almost overpowering sadness. The emotion is that so finely expressed at a later period in *The Flowers of the Forest.* The feeling is as of a brief, bright morning, full of promise, making the hills splendid and the heart glad; but ere noon we have cloud and rain and tears, and the evening closes around us with only the memory of the vanished joy.

No doubt a series of tragic incidents may give a prevailing tone to the feeling and the poetry of a district, apart in a great measure from the character of the scenery. But I cannot help thinking that in this case the nature of the scenery has had a great deal to do in predisposing the imagination to a melancholy cast, and thus fitting the mind for receiving and retaining, if not originating, the tragic or pathetic creation. This influence, too, might be wholly an unconscious one for many generations. It would thus affect the singer without his knowing it distinctly, and it would not be marked in his verse, or, if indicated at all, only incidentally. And this is exactly what we find in those older ballads of the Yarrow. We have no direct description of the features of the vale, but we have now and again a wondrously impressive and characteristic epithet, which lets us into the secret of the minstrel's heart, and by none is his inner soul more fully revealed than by the inexpressibly pathetic yet tenderly beautiful phrase, "the dowie houms of Yarrow."

Nor will any one who is familiar with the Vale of Yarrow find much difficulty in understanding how it is suited to pathetic verse. The rough and broken, yet clear, beautiful, and wide-spreading stream, has no grand cliffs to show, and it is not surrounded by high and overshadowing hills. Here and there it flows placidly, reflectively, in large liquid lapses through an open valley of the deepest summer green—still, let us be thankful, in its upper reaches at least, mantled by nature, and untouched by plough or harrow. There is a placid monotone about its bare, treeless scenery; an unbroken

pastoral stillness on the sloping braes and hillsides, as they rise, fall, and blend in a uniformly deep green colouring. The silence of the place is forced upon the attention, deepened even, by the occasional break in the flow of the stream, or by the bleating of the sheep that, white and motionless amid their pasture, dot the knowes. We are attracted by the silence, and we are also repressed. There is the pleasure of hushed enjoyment. The spirit of the scene is in these immortal lines:—

"Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
A softness still and holy;
The grace of forest charms decayed,
And pastoral melancholy."

These deep green grassy knowes of the valley are peculiarly susceptible of atmospheric change — of light and shade. In a morning, with a blue sky, or with breaks of sunlight through the white fleeting clouds, the green hillsides and the stream smile and gleam in sympathy with the cheerfulness of heaven. It is then we hear of "the silver stream" and "the bonnie houms of Yarrow," and we exult in the fresh feeling which inspired the old lines:—

"Pan, playing on his aiten reed,
And shepherds him attending,
Do here resort, their flocks to feed,
The hills and haughs commending;
With cur and kent[1] upon the bent,
Sing to the sun, *good-morrow*,
And swear nae fields mair pleasure yields,
Than Leader Haughs and Yarrow."

[1] Long staff with curved head used by shepherds.

But under a grey sky, or at the gloamin', the Yarrow wears a peculiarly wan aspect—a look of sadness. And no valley I know is more susceptible of sudden change. The Spirit of the air can speedily weave out of the mists that gather high up on the massive hills at the heads of the Meggat and the Talla, a wide-spreading web of greyish cloud—the "skaum" of the sky—that casts a gloom over the tender green of the hills, and dims the face of loch and stream in a pensive shadow. The saddened heart would readily find there fit analogue and nourishment for its sorrow.

This character of changeableness has made the scenery peculiarly suitable for the nurture and expression of varying emotion—the notes of joy and grief. It lay at the heart of the earlier poetry of the Yarrow, inspiring it, without itself receiving definite utterance. In the refrain of *The Dowie Dens,* as it alternates between "bonnie banks" and "dowie houms," we see the mutual influence of scenery and feeling. Only in the more modern songs, however, has the connection between the mood of mind and the aspect of nature been expressly proclaimed. A lover is in doubt as to the answer to his suit, and then he feels that nature is hushed in sympathy with the eager expectant state of his feelings:—

> "The hills and dales no more resound
> The lambkins' tender cry,
> Without one murmur Yarrow stole
> In dimpling silence bye."

But the answer is favourable; there is an outbreak of joyous feeling, and then the other aspect of the scenery strikes the mind:—

"The hills and dales again resound
The lambkins' tender cry,
With all his murmurs Yarrow trill'd
The song of triumph bye."[1]

But, doubtless, there has been an action and interaction between the scenery of the Yarrow and the poetic thought which has brooded over it. The result to us is something altogether different from the bare actualities of the scene; and, with all this older growth of poetry and tradition, it is not to be wondered at that the Yarrow we now feel is not altogether the Yarrow we see. Story, legend, tradition, ballad and song, are now inseparably fused with the stream, the hills, and the glens. We know the Yarrow as identified with quiet pastoral life, and its peculiar seclusion; but we feel it also to be associated with stories of love and hope, of sorrow and despair, deeds of blood, and old quaint romantic memories. The impress of these is on all the natural scenery; and when we look at it or think of it, it is not the bare stream or glen which lies before us, but the Yarrow of the faded forest, of the Dowie Dens, of the Blackhouse Tragedy, of the wan maiden awaking to life in St Mary's Kirk at the touch of her lover's hand, of the sweet Flower of Dryhope wedded to the rough reiver, of the youth dead in his prime of love and promise in the cleaving of the crag. If the Yarrow gave help to its poetry by its peculiar scenery, that has been amply repaid. The actual scene has been enriched, glorified, and transfigured by the return into its bosom of the wealth of imaginative creation, realised as the very life of the vale.

[1] Hamilton of Bangour, *Poems*, 75—ed. 1760.

Old-world thoughts—"the treasured dreams of times long past"—flow into the senses, mingle with what we see and feel, and make for us another than the actual Yarrow:—

> "I see, but not by sight alone,
> Loved Yarrow, have I won thee;
> A ray of Fancy still survives—
> Her sunshine plays upon thee!"

Or, as Hogg puts it more sternly—

> "While o'er thy green and lowly graves,
> The moorcocks bay and plovers wail:
> The mountain spirits on the gale
> Oft o'er thee sound the requiem dread;
> And warrior shades and spectres pale,
> Still linger by the quiet dead."

The Love Songs of the Tweed contain the most explicit references to the scenery, and show an increasing appreciation of that softer side of nature which appears in the valley of the river. For, while the wildest, grandest, and most secluded of the scenery is to be found among the great hills, and in the glens of the waters and the burns, the softest, the most cultured and beautiful, lies in the valley of the Tweed. You may see there, in the summer time, the gleaming flow, and hear the music, by day and night, of a river clear as the light of heaven. Its motion is poetry itself, as it now stays calm in pool, and then rushes bright and joyous in stream. There are green haughs, soft meadows, and corn-fields, and gently sloping hillsides, in many parts well and picturesquely wooded—all looking as if the human life there were pleasant and comfortable. It is in this region that we find

the source of the Border love-songs in the seventeenth century; and they grow increasingly in sympathy with the green haughs, the sunny gleam, and the gentle murmur of the river, the notes of early birds, the bleating of lambs, and the melancholy music of the sequestered cushat of the woods in the vale of the Tweed. In the earlier songs this influence is to a great extent an unconscious one. The singer felt, but did not dwell on the aspects of the scenery, which yet coincided with the passion he sought to express. The sympathy he had for the nature around him was subordinate to and illustrative of that primal emotion—human love. We yet see that the sense of the gentle beauty in things lay deep down in his heart, and, like the burn that flows hidden under the grassy fringe and nourishes the verdure of the glen, helped to sustain the lightsome life of many a song. And we have only to come down to the more modern period of Robert Crawford, to find how profuse was the feeling for nature that was mingled with the expression of passion, and to the later times of Leyden, Hogg, Scott, and others, to observe the depth and directness of sympathy for the hills, glens, and streams of the Border land. This was the new element in the poetry of the Borders; and it was from its rise and spread in the district that the fresh breath of nature passed into the Scottish, and, we may add, the English, poetry of this century.

The songs of Tweedside have a character wholly their own. They breathe a sweet pastoral melody. There is a passionate fondness dashed with sadness and regret—a mingling of love and sorrow, of hopefulness

and despair. This curious blending of opposite feelings flows all through these songs, and seems to reflect the familiar contrast in the scenery—the sparkling gleam of the morning and noon gradually passing into the pathetic shade of the gloamin' on the river itself. This key-note of Tweedside song was first struck in the middle of the seventeenth century by a lord of Neidpath, in a fine lyric. It is entitled *Tweedside.* Its author was John Hay, tenth Lord Yester, third Earl and second Marquis of Tweeddale—a direct descendant of Hay of Lochquharret and Mary the elder daughter of the famous Sir Simon Fraser of Oliver, the hero of Roslin. Lord Tweeddale, born 1645, took a very prominent part in the public events of the times of the Restoration, the Revolution, and the Union. He died in 1713. The Tweeddale family had still at that period (at least as late as 1686) their ancient Peeblesshire estate, inherited from the lord of Oliver and Neidpath. The tenth lord of Yester lived in his youth at Neidpath Castle, and obviously had a warm love for the banks of the Tweed, which helped to inspire his song:—

"When Maggie and me were acquaint,
I carried my noddle fu' hie,
Nae lintwhite in a' the gay plain,
Nae gowdspink[1] sae bonnie as she.

I whistled, I piped, and I sang;
I woo'd, but I cam nae great speed;
Therefore I maun wander abroad,
And lay my banes far frae the Tweed.

[1] Goldfinch.

To Maggie my love I did tell;
My tears did my passion express:
Alas! for I lo'ed her ower weel,
And the women lo'e sic a man less.

Her heart it was frozen and cauld;
Her pride had my ruin decreed;
Therefore I maun wander abroad,
And lay my banes far frae the Tweed."

In this there is true, simple feeling, simply expressed, warmed and coloured by a sense of nature around the poet—the purity of the lintwhite, the unobtrusive beauty of the goldfinch, the quiet flow of the river, happiness within reach, yet, when sought for, eluding the grasp and lost for ever. It is interesting to note that the natural objects which attracted poetic sympathy in this the earliest remaining Tweeddale song are the birds of the district and the quiet of the river, unexpressed in the song, yet obviously consciously felt all through it. There is no reference to the wild flowers of the plains or hills, unless indeed generally in the somewhat conventional phrase, "the gay plain." It is curious to find in the song of *Leader Haughs and Yarrow* of the wandering minstrel, Nicol Burne, who was contemporaneous with Lord Yester, that the main thing he notices in the description of the Yarrow is precisely the notes of the birds:—

"A mile below who lists to ride
Will hear the mavis singing,
Into Saint Leonard's banks she bides,
Sweet birks her head owerhinging.
The lint-white loud, and progne proud,
With tuneful throats and narrow,
Into Saint Leonard's banks they sing,
As sweetly as in Yarrow.
. . . . . .

By break of day the lark can say,
I'll bid you a good-morrow;
I'll stretch my wing, and mounting sing,
O'er Leader Haughs and Yarrow."

This appreciation of the notes of birds, rather than of the colours and forms of the flowers of the field, was, I think, quite natural in the circumstances of the time. Men had been educated to a sense of sweet sounds; they had no training in painting, or any art that fitted them for the appreciation of colour or form.

There is another Tweedside song, entitled *John Hay's Bonnie Lassie*, which is supposed to have been written about 1670; and, curiously enough, in honour of Lady Margaret Hay, the eldest daughter of the first Marquis of Tweeddale. The tradition is that it was the composition of a working joiner, who had ventured to cherish secretly in his heart a fruitless passion for the high-born Lady Margaret. She afterwards became the wife of the third Earl of Roxburghe, and died near Kelso in 1753, at the age of ninety-six. There are two verses in it worth quoting:—

"She's fresh as the spring, and sweet as Aurora,
When birds mount and sing, bidding day a good-morrow;
The sward of the mead, enamell'd with daisies,
Looks wither'd and dead, when twined of her graces.

But if she appear where verdures invite her,
The fountains run clear, and the flowers smell the sweeter.
'Tis heaven to be by, when her wit is a-flowing;
Her smiles and bright eyes set my spirits a-glowing."

Here at length the daisy and the greensward, and the wild flowers of the haugh, have become objects of the

poet's cherished love, whose attractiveness is enhanced by the presence of the object of his passion. The Tweedside joiner lad, humbly born as he might have been, was yet a noble man by nature; and he, in the seventeenth century, on the banks of the Tweed, struck the key-note of that strain which the Ayrshire ploughman caught up and beautified in the eighteenth century, and left as an imperishable melody for all time; for he, too, mingled in his song love and flowers and birds:—

"I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair:
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air:
There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By fountain, shaw, or green,
There's not a bonnie bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean."

The song of *Ettrick Banks* is an old one. It first appeared in print in Thomson's *Orpheus Caledonius* in 1725; but it may be regarded as considerably older than this both in air and words. Pinkerton is inclined to refer it to the period between the time of Mary and the Restoration. This song has some exquisite references to local scenery and traits of the older shepherd life. These could have been noted only by a native of the district, or one resident there, and thoroughly familiar with the people and the scenes:—

"On Ettrick banks, ae simmer night,
At gloamin', when the sheep drave hame,
I met my lassie, braw and tight,
Come wading barefoot a' her lane.

. . . . . .

A' day, when we hae wrocht eneuch,
When winter frosts and snaw begin,
Soon as the sun gaes west the loch,
At night when ye sit down to spin,
I'll screw my pipes and play a spring;
And thus the weary night will end,
Till the tender kid and lamb time bring
Our pleasant simmer back again.

Syne, when the trees are in their bloom,
And gowans glent o'er ilka fiel',
I'll meet my lass amang the broom,
And lead you to my simmer shiel.
There, far frae a' their scornfu' din,
That mak' the kindly heart their sport,
We'll laugh, and kiss, and dance and sing,
And gar the langest day seem short."

In the latter part of the seventeenth century we meet with the contributions to the literature of the Tweed of the noble and heroic Lady Grisell Baillie, a name that is synonymous with filial and wifely devotion, with courage, prudence, and sublime endurance. Born in 1665, she was the eldest daughter of Sir Patrick Home, afterwards the first Earl of Marchmont; and she became the wife, in 1692, of George Baillie, the eldest son of Robert Baillie of Jerviswood—a man who gave his life for civil and religious liberty in a cruel and tyrannical time. Her life is a romance of noble feeling and varying fortune. Her father, who was the friend of Robert Baillie, sent her when a very young girl to visit Baillie in the prison of Edinburgh, with a secret but important letter which she was to contrive to deliver. She succeeded, and brought back certain needed intelligence. The young lass riding from the Merse through the night passed the city gate early in the morning, and above her was the

ghastly spectacle of the heads of the men who had suffered for the cause for which her father's friend was about to die. Every one knows how, when her own father was driven to hiding in the underground burial-vault of Polwarth Church, she sought the place at midnight, stumbling alone in the darkness over the grave-mounds, and yet courageous, fearing not the dead, but ready to be scared by any sign of the living. Then there was the exile in Holland,—the return to England with the happier days of the Revolution. When her father shared the fortune of the Prince of Orange, and his estate was restored to him, his daughter was pressed by the Princess to remain in London as one of her maids of honour. But the simple and single-hearted Grisell characteristically declined, preferring the banks of the Tweed and the haughs of the Merse—the scenes of her childhood—to the glitter of court life and the attractions of courtiers. A few years after this she was married to Robert Baillie, whom she had met on that long-ago visit to the prison of Edinburgh, the man who had been the object of her constant lifelong love.

In a most interesting *Memoir*, her daughter, Lady Murray of Stanhope, in Peeblesshire, has pictured her as "middle-sized, well-made, clever in her person, very handsome, with a life and sweetness in her eyes very uncommon, and great delicacy in all her features; her hair was chestnut, and to her last she had the finest complexion, with the clearest red in her cheeks and lips, that could be seen in one of fifteen."[1] Add to these

[1] *Memoirs of George Baillie of Jerviswood, and of Lady Grisell Baillie.* By their daughter, Lady Murray of Stanhope. P. 54. Edinburgh: 1824.

personal lineaments her tenderness, her sympathy, her unfailing spirit in misfortune,—having no notion, as she used to say, of any other cause of sorrow but the death and affliction of those she loved,—and you have a most attractive specimen of the Scottish gentlewoman of the seventeenth century. She died in 1746, at the great age of eighty-one. She lies buried appropriately in the churchyard of Mellerstain, beside her husband, and within hearing of the rush of the Tweed, which she loved so well. Her elder daughter was married to a Peeblesshire laird, Sir Alexander Murray of Stanhope, a man of eccentric character and jealous temper, but of accomplished tastes. We have still traces of his handiwork in the rich English landscape of hedgerows and stately trees which are to be found in the pleasant haugh of the Tweed, from the Crown Ford to Stobo Burn-foot, the Polternam of the Cymri. Lady Murray of Stanhope was well known in London in the middle and latter part of the eighteenth century as the most accomplished singer of Scottish melodies in her day. The estates of Stanhope and Hillhouse passed, in 1769, from the Murrays, owing to their participation in the Rebellion.

Lady Grisell Baillie's most important song is entitled, *Were na my Heart licht I wad Dee.* It was apparently printed for the first time in the *Tea-Table Miscellany.* The burden of it is that a lass engaged to be married is prevented by the relations of the youth from completing the engagement. It is a fine specimen of the pure Doric Scots of the time, and has wonderfully beautiful touches of natural feeling, pathos, and humour :—

"When bonnie young Johnie cam ower the sea,
He said he saw naething sae lovely as me;
He hecht me baith rings and monie braw things;
And were na my heart licht I wad dee.

His wee wilfu' tittie[1] she looed na me
(I was taller and twice as bonnie as she);
She raised sic a pother 'twixt him and his mother,
That were na my heart licht I wad dee.

His kin was for ane of a higher degree,
Said—Would he wed ane was landless like me?
Albeit I was bonnie, I was na for Johnie,
And were na my heart licht I wad dee.

. . . . . .

His tittie she was baith wylie and slee,
She spied me as I cam ower the lee;
And then she ran in and made sic a din,—
Believe your ain een an' ye trow na me.

His bonnet stood aye fu' round on his broo;
His auld ane look'd aye as weel as some's new;
But noo he lets't wear ony gait it will hing,
And casts himself dowie upon the corn-bing.

And now he gaes daundrin' aboot the dykes,
And a' he dow do is to hund the tykes;
The live-lang nicht he ne'er steeks his e'e;
And were na my heart licht I wad dee.

Were I but young for thee as I hae been,
We should hae been gallopin' down on yon green,
And linkin' it on yon lily-white lea;
And wow! gin I were but young for thee!"

The same true and tender hand has left us two stanzas of great simplicity and beauty, entitled *O, the Ewe Buchtin's Bonnie*, which seem to be the echo of her own grief at one time of her life:—

"O, the ewe buchtin's bonnie, baith e'ening and morn,
When our blithe shepherds play on the bog-reed and horn;

[1] Sister.

While we're milkin', they're liltin', baith pleasant and clear,
But my heart's like to break when I think on my dear.

O, the shepherds take pleasure to blow on the horn,
To raise up their flocks o' sheep soon i' the morn;
On the bonnie green banks they feed pleasant and free,
But, alas, my dear heart, all my sighing's for thee!"

These lines still survived in 1819, in Grisell Home's girlish handwriting, after more than two hundred years.[1] They were enclosed in a letter to her brother Patrick, who was then living with his friend, and her lover, George Baillie, both exiles in Holland in the cruel time preceding the Revolution of 1688. Whether they are now to be found I do not know. Further, she must have written or preserved more song and ballad than has been printed in her name; for Lady Murray, in the *Memoir* of her mother, tells us, "I have now a book of songs of her writing when there [in Holland], many of them interrupted, half-writ, some broke off in the middle of a sentence,"[2]—interrupted, we may well suppose, by the call to family service cheerfully obeyed. Is it vain now to inquire as to what has become of this MS. book? Its recovery, if that were possible, might be an unspeakable gain to Border and Scottish song. The MS., if it still exists, must surely be with the Earl of Haddington or some collateral descendant of Lady Murray of Stanhope.

A song known as *The Ewe-Buchts, Marion,* appeared in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany* in 1724. It opens thus:—

"Will ye go to the ewe-buchts, Marion,
And wear in the sheep wi' me?
The sun shines sweet, my Marion,
But nae half sae sweet as thee.

[1] See Thomas Pringle, *Poems*, Appendix.

[2] *Memoirs*, 49.

O Marion's a bonny lass,
And blithe's the blink o' her ee;
And fain would I marry Marion,
Gin Marion would marry me."

A personage known as Daft Jock Gray of Gilmanscleuch, referred to in Dr Russell's *Reminiscences*, used to sing a version of this song with a peculiar refrain:—

"And it's round about the merry knowes, Marion,
Round about the merry knowes wi' me;
Round about the merry knowes, Marion,
For Whitslade's lying lea."

Nicol Burne refers to this place:—

"In Burn Mill bog and Whitslaid Shaws,
The fearful hare she panteth."

Whitslade is on the Ale Water in Selkirkshire. It was for many centuries the seat of a powerful branch of the Scotts—"chief of the Aill Water." The proprietorship of it was disputed in the middle of the seventeenth century, and during the litigation it lay uncultivated.[1] This enables us to approximate to the date of the composition.

Certain unconnected stanzas of an old ballad referring to an heiress of Mossfennan, with which the estate of Logan, or the Logan Lee, was then as now conjoined, have floated for long in the memory of old people about Broughton and Tweedsmuir. Some of these were known to Miss Jeanie M. Watson, who was born and lived near Broughton, and who was well accomplished in the old lore and story of the district. She has printed those stanzas in her interesting book, *Life in our Village*, but no complete or consistent version of the ballad has as yet been given. I have been able to recover several

[1] Lecture on Hogg, by Dr Marshall, printed in the *Saltcoats Herald*.

stanzas from oral recitation, which, compared and taken along with Miss Watson's verses, seem to make up the ballad. The stanzas now printed for the first time were obtained from William Welsh, the Peeblesshire cottar and poet, to whom I am also indebted for the new version of *The Dowie Dens*. His statement was that he had heard it recited by an old woman named Jenny Moffat, who died at Romanno Bridge in 1874, in her ninety-ninth year. Certain stanzas of it, including the last, were also sung by his mother.

Stanzas 1, 2, 3, 10, or stanzas corresponding to them, were known to Miss Watson; the others, seven in all, are due to W. Welsh. The arrangement of them is chiefly mine.

The Ballad of Mossfennan; or, The Logan Lee.

1.

"There cam three wooers out o' the west,
Booted and spurred as ye weel micht see,
And they lichted a' at Mossfennan Yett,
A little below the Logan Lee.

2.

Three cam east, and three cam west,
And three cam frae the north countrie;
The rest cam a' frae Moffat side,
And lichted at the Logan Lee.

3.

'Is the mistress o' this house within,
The bonnie lass we've come to see?'
'I'm the leddy o' this place,
And *madam* when ye speak to me.'

4.

'If ye be the leddy o' this house,
That we hae come sae far to see,
There's many a servant lass in our country side,
That far excels the Leddy o' the Logan Lee.'

5.

'Then it's no to be my weel-faured face
That ye hae come sae far to see,
But it's a' for the bonny bob-tailed yowes,
That trinle [1] alang the Logan Lee.

6.

But be I black or be I fair,
Be I comely for to see,
It mak's nae matter what I be,
While I've mony a bonny yowe on the Logan Lee.

7.

I have seven yowe-milkers a' in a bught,
Wi' their coaties kilted abune their knee,
And ye may seek a wife amang them,
But ye'll ne'er get the Leddy o' the Logan Lee.' [2]

8.

'Be she black or be she fair,
I carena a boddle [3] what she may be;
I wad rather hae ane without a plack [4]
Than wed the Leddy o' the Logan Lee.'

9.

'Some says I loe young Powmood,
Other some says he loes na' me;
But I weel may compare wi' his bastard blood,
Though I hadna a yowe on the Logan Lee.' [5]

---

[1] Akin to trundle, referring perhaps to the ascent and descent of the ewes in line over the rounded knowes.

[2] Other version :—

"I have three ewe-milkers,
As fine women as ye may see;
Ye may get your choice o' ane and a',
But ye'll ne'er wed the Leddy o' the Logan Lee."

[3] Two pennies Scots, or third of an English halfpenny.

[4] Third of an English penny.

[5] Miss Watson's version is :—

"Some say I loe young Powmood,
And some say that he loes na' me;
But I think I'm a match for the best o' his bluid,
Though I hadna a yowe on the Logan Lee."

10.

Graham o' Slipperfield [1] and his grey mere,
Young Powmood wi' his greyhounds three,
Charlie and his pistols clear—
Ye'll ne'er hae a yowe on the Logan Lee.

11.

But young John Graham is a weel-faured man,
And a cunning [2] man he seems to be ;
But a better lad, wi' less parade,[3]
And he'll be the Laird o' the Logan Lee."

We can form some opinion of the approximate date of the incident of this ballad. The estate of Mossfennan, after being in early times the property of the family of Purvoys (Purves), passed into the hands of the Flemings of Biggar. One of them, Malcolm, third Lord Fleming, son of the Lord John murdered by the Tweedies on the heights of Kingledoors, got the lands erected into a free barony in 1538. After the Flemings, the barony passed to a family of the name of Scott, who held it until about the middle of last century, when it was acquired by the Welshes (1759). The reference to Powmood or Polmood as being of "bastard blood," fixes the date as after the year 1689; for in that year died Robert Hunter of Polmood, the last of the legitimate line of the Hunters of Polmood. Through some arrangement on the part of this Robert Hunter, the estate of Polmood passed to descendants of George Hunter, his illegitimate son. Thomas Hunter, the last

[1] Slipperfield is the name of an estate in the north of Peeblesshire. It consisted originally of three separate properties, each bearing the name. One of these—Slipperfield Loch-Third—was in the possession of Robert Graham as late as 1715.

[2] Capable, skilful.

[3] Other version :—

"For he cam' doun by the Lang Cleugh Fit."

descendant of this George Hunter, died a young man, and unmarried, in 1765. This sickly youth on his death-bed made a will assigning the estate to a person of the name of Alexander Hunter, with whom he had resided in Edinburgh, but who was no relation whatever to the family of Polmood. A daughter of this Alexander Hunter became Baroness Forbes, and carried the estate into that family.[1] The incident of the ballad is thus restricted to the period between 1689 and 1765; and we may take it as having occurred about the first quarter of last century. We find, indeed, from the book of *Retours*, under January 9, 1685, two ladies, Janneta and Grizalda Scott, returned as heirs-portioners of their brother-german, William Scott of Mossfennan, in this estate, and also in half of the quarter of Logan, called also the quarter of Mossfennan. The heiress was thus in all probability either Janet or Grisell Scott. According to the statement made to me by William Welsh, the date would quite tally with that which I have inferred. He said that Jenny Moffat got the ballad from a neighbour —that is, a fellow-servant—who as a young woman was in the house of Mossfennan when the incident occurred, —was, in fact, serving with the heiress. The lady of the house, she said, composed it herself, and used to repeat the

[1] This incident of illegitimacy in the Polmood family, and the alienation of the estate to Alexander Hunter, gave rise to the famous and long-continued law plea for its restoration to the alleged lawful heir of line—Adam Hunter, tenant in Alterstane. Adam was served heir on three lines of propinquity by a jury at Peebles in 1802. But the matter was carried to the Court of Session, and after long years of pleaing and counter-pleaing, Adam, wearied and worn out, was laid to his rest in Drummelzier churchyard, without having succeeded in obtaining the estate. See the bulky "Record of the Proceedings" in the case, from 1780 onwards into the present century.

stanzas to this confidential waiting-woman, whose memory fully retained them. This is quite compatible with the dates. Jenny Moffat died in 1874, at the age of ninety-nine. This takes her birth back to 1775. She might quite well have known a fellow-servant who was in Mossfennan in the first quarter or half of the eighteenth century, and who knew the story and the ballad itself.

A contemporary name of note associated with the history and poetry of Tweeddale is that of Dr Alexander Pennycuik of Newhall. He was not a song-writer, but he has left a number of pieces in verse of considerable general and local interest. His father, also Dr Alexander Pennycuik of Newhall, and the representative of the old family of Pennycuik of Pennycuik—*i.e.*, the Gowk's Hill—was surgeon to General John Bannier in the Swedish wars under the great Gustavus Adolphus, and surgeon also to the auxiliary Scots army in England during the troubled period that preceded the Restoration. The father married Janet Murray, the heiress of Romanno, leaving a son, the poet, and died after the Revolution of 1688. This son, the author of the *Description of Tweeddale* (1715), was born in 1652, and died in 1722. He was buried in the churchyard of Newlands by the side of his father. Dr Pennycuik was assisted in his *Description of Tweeddale* by John Forbes, who succeeded him in the estate of Newhall. Pennycuik was a friend of Allan Ramsay; and it has been said that it was to Pennycuik that Ramsay owed the plot of *The Gentle Shepherd*. Dr Pennycuik's poems, and their general characteristics, are well known. They are not without a certain amount of humour, and they are often very

coarse in portraiture and suggestion—the taint of the times; yet they give a true, curious, often pointed description of the rural life and manners of the period of the Restoration and the Revolution. They contain also many interesting references to names and families in Tweeddale, which now, alas! have ceased to be represented in the district; for, with one or two exceptions, the really old families of Tweeddale do not now hold the lands of the county: their memory has, in a great measure, perished; and with their names have passed away many ennobling historical associations.

But in Dr Pennycuik's poems, though he was in the habit of traversing Tweeddale as a practising surgeon, we look in vain for any trace of feeling suggested by the scenery of the district in which he lived. There is not a single characteristic natural feature of Tweeddale in all his poems. In his lines entitled *To my Friend inviting him to the Country*, where we might expect some local description, all we get is this:—

> "Sir, fly the smoke and clamour of the town,
> Breathe country air, and see the farms cut down;
> Revel on nature's sweets, and dine upon the chief,
> Praising the granter of the plenteous sheaf;
> Free from all care, we'll range through various fields,
> Study those plants which mother nature yields:
> On Lyne's meand'ring brooks sometimes we'll fish,
> The trout's a brave, but no expensive dish;
> When limbs are wearied, and our sport is done,
> We'll trudge to Cant's Walls[1] by the setting sun."[2]

Dr Pennycuik obviously represented that style of Scottish poetry which contented itself with noting the

[1] A small inn that stood near Newlands Kirk, not far from Romanno, the residence of Dr Pennycuik. The house of Callands is on or close to the site of it.

[2] *Poems*, 414.

manners of the time, mixing observation with shrewd judgment and sense; but feeling nothing of nature, and quite incapable of touching the heart by pathos, or filling the soul with imagery.

Towards the close of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century there was a scholarly band of men in Edinburgh, the centre of whom was Dr Archibald Pitcairn. They were accomplished Latin versifiers, on the model chiefly of Horace. One of the most distinguished of them was Sir William Scott of Thirlestane (born about 1670, died 1725). Twenty-four of his poems appear in *Selecta Poemata* (Edin., 1727). It is difficult to determine how far the scenery of the Border, familiar to his ancestors and himself, affected the poetry of this descendant of an old and storied line; but in the poems which he has addressed to his friend Sir William Bennet of Grubbet, an estate up near the Cheviots, Scott shows marked feeling for rural objects, aspects of nature, and country life.

Thus:—

> "Nunquam carebunt fructibus arbores;
> Fœcundet imber lætificans ferens
> Messes, et hortorum colores
> Vivificans viridesque silvas."

One likes also his fine penetrative and pithy tribute to Allan Ramsay:—

> "Qui Scotis numeros suos, novoque
> Priscam restituit vigore linguam."

Sir William Scott married in 1699 the Mistress of Napier, heiress of the Napier peerage, and from this marriage is descended the present Lord Napier and Ettrick.

CHAPTER VII.

BORDER POETRY—EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

The Earl of Stirling, Drummond of Hawthornden, Aytoun of Kinaldie, died before the middle of the seventeenth century. From that date down to the first quarter of the eighteenth there appeared no Scottish poet of any public note. In the Lowland valleys and glens there had been heard during that period, and even long before it, scattered strains of ballad and song, many of them full of fine, simple, and truthful feeling. These were caught up and sung in the home circles and at the firesides of the Lowland farmhouses and shepherds' cots. But there was, as yet, no attempt at any single great poem. The spirit that was in the older ballads and songs had not yet been concentrated and distilled into one pure continuous melody.

James Watson, in his *Collection of Scots Poems Ancient and Modern*, published in three parts from 1706 to 1711, had drawn attention to some of those floating songs and ballads. And the *Evergreen* and *Tea-Table Miscellany* of Allan Ramsay—both published in 1724—further enhanced the interest in this line of literature.

It was diligently cultivated by subsequent collectors. Percy's *Reliques*, which referred to both sides of the Border, in 1765 opened up the widest field of ballad literature as yet disclosed. Percy was followed by David Herd, with his *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs*, in 1769. Then there came Evans' *Old Ballads*, 1777; Pinkerton's *Scottish Tragic Ballads*, 1781, and his *Select Scottish Ballads*, 1783. Ritson began to publish books of songs in 1783, and continued down to 1795. James Johnson, in *The Scots' Musical Museum*, 1787, greatly aided the work; Burns contributing new songs. J. G. Dalzell, in 1801, gave *Scottish Poems of the Sixteenth Century*. Walter Scott, in 1802, gave the first two volumes of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. The third volume appeared in 1803. This was a work second in importance and immediate influence only to that of Percy himself. In 1806, Robert Jamieson gave to the world his *Popular Ballads and Songs*, and pointed to the large Scandinavian element in our ballad literature. Since then we find on the roll of distinguished collectors and editors, Finlay, David Laing, C. K. Sharpe, Maidment, Utterson, Buchan, Allan Cunningham, Kinloch, Motherwell, R. Chambers, Peter Cunningham, Aytoun, Chappell, Child, &c.

Dr Samuel Johnson, the best representative of the stilted artificialism of his time, sneered, as was to be expected, at the labours of Percy. But the resuscitated ballads and songs were true to natural feeling and to the primary and permanent human emotions; and, though they were but the material of a literature, they formed the well-spring of a new and free literary de-

velopment, which, while it yields nothing in the power of imaginative creation to the old, and nothing really in point of true artistic perfection, far surpasses it in the freshness and the living power which truthful delineation of the facts of man's spiritual nature, and of the aspects of the world around him, alone can inspire.

But it was an original work which, in the early part of last century, first disclosed to the world the wealth of beauty in Scottish scenery, and the naturalness, simplicity, and pathos that lay close at hand in Scottish rural life. This was *The Gentle Shepherd*, published in 1725. The feeling for the natural scenery of Scotland had been growing in susceptible hearts in this first quarter of the century. James Thomson, the son of the minister of Ednam, whose boyhood had been passed at Southdean, high up among the wild and striking hills which slope down to the picturesque and beautifully wooded valley of the Jed, carried with him to England haunting impressions of winter storms which had swept the Carter Fell and passed over rugged Ruberslaw. And, a year after *The Gentle Shepherd*, there appeared *Winter*, a poem, followed in 1727 by *Summer*. Thomson dared to be true to the face of nature, and to make the delineation of it the all-sufficient object of poetry. And it enhances the merit of the poet that in this, a new form of poetic art, he was thoroughly successful, and influenced the eighteenth-century literature of Britain, indeed all British literature since his time. But *The Gentle Shepherd* was more immediately powerful in Scotland. Ramsay's poem drew attention to the Lowland and pastoral scenery of Scotland, and hence naturally to the vales of the Tweed,

the Teviot, and the Yarrow. It thus became the fashion of the versifiers of the time to choose for the scenery and the subjects of their songs the pastoral localities and legendary incidents of those streams. This tendency has continued down to our own time; and, looking back over the hundred and sixty-eight years that have elapsed since Ramsay evoked the full power of Scottish song, and gave it its pastoral impulse, we find a series of poets more or less inspired by the Tweed, the Yarrow, the Ettrick, and the Teviot, such as no other locality of Scotland can parallel in numbers or surpass in pathos, tenderness, and truthfulness. Besides Ramsay himself, we have his friend Hamilton of Bangour, Robert Crawford, Logan, Leyden, Hogg, and Scott; and, if not in the same rank with these, yet we have true singers in James Nicol, Thomas Smibert, Henry Scott Riddell, and several others. The power, too, of the scenery, and the poetic strains which it has inspired, are seen in men who were neither natives of nor resident in the district, as Robert Fergusson, Langhorne, and Wordsworth. Besides all these, there has been in the district itself many a local poet, unknown to public fame, who nevertheless felt the power of the scenery and the charm and humour of the simple manners of the people, and who was a source of pleasure, cheerfulness, and refinement in his own small circle. Alas, that so few of these singers have left behind them even the memory of their names! But, looking at the whole, we may well ask, Did ever single Scottish or other stream quicken in the hearts of men such a flow of song as that which has been inspired by the Tweed and its tributary waters?

It is true, as Mr Ruskin has remarked, true however we may explain it, that the scenery most fruitful of literary intellect is not the absolutely mountainous nor the perfectly flat; it is the mixture of hill and vale. Neither Switzerland nor Holland has been most prolific in poetry or high literature. In the ancient world, the human intellect rose to its greatest fulness, and acquired its highest finish amid the hills, the valleys, and the gleaming waters of Attica—a varied land of mountain and of glen. So we find one of the largest, richest crops, both of intellect and imagination, in that limited district which stretches from the Pentlands to the Cheviots and the Solway—the Border land of Scotland. With the mountain there is constant struggle, with the pastoral plain there is easy repose; the mountain and the plain together call forth human energy and give human contentment; and on the life of energy and repose bloom the sweet flowers of song, and rise to maturity the growths of intellect.

Of Allan Ramsay's special contributions to the poetry of the Tweed and Yarrow, I am afraid I cannot speak highly. His *Mary Scott, the Flower of Yarrow*, is indeed in the poorest conventional taste of last century—artificial, rhetorical, affected. His set of verses to the tune of *Busk ye, Busk ye, my Bonny Bride*[1] is better, and in it there is one fine natural touch:—

> "To western breezes Flora yields,
> And when the beams are kindly warming,
> Blythness appears o'er all the fields,
> And nature looks mair fresh and charming.

[1] *Miscellany*, i. 139.

Learn frae the burns that trace the mead,
Tho' on their banks the roses blossom,
Yet hastilie they flow to Tweed,
And pour their sweetness in his bosom."

But on the whole James Hogg was not far wrong when he sang:—

"Redoubted Ramsay's peasant skill
Flung some strained notes along the hill;
His was some lyre from lady's hall,
And not the mountain harp at all."

The next name of note in connection with the poetry of Tweedside is that of Robert Crawford, a cadet of the family of Drumsoy in Renfrewshire, and a friend of Hamilton of Bangour, the author of *Busk ye, Busk ye, my Bonny, Bonny Bride.* Crawford was born about 1695, and he died in 1732, at the age of thirty-seven. He is said to have been drowned on a return voyage from France. Crawford, though not a native of the district, seems to have been enamoured of Tweedside. He is the author of the songs entitled *Tweedside, Bush aboon Traquair, Leader Haughs and Yarrow,* and several other kindred strains contributed to Allan Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany.* The finest of Crawford's songs is, no doubt, *Tweedside.* His general style partakes a good deal of the affectation and artificial mannerism of the time; but in *Tweedside* he has deeply felt and yielded to the freshness and truth of the nature which he seeks to describe. We feel that he has caught the characteristic features of the valley of the Tweed, and pictured for us a glorious spring day, in which birds sing, and the river glides brightly and gently, and the primroses spring in the woods, and the

lambs bleat pathetically on the hills, and the whole air is filled with peace and love and gladness :—

"What beauties does Flora disclose !
How sweet are her smiles upon Tweed !
Yet Mary's, still sweeter than those,
Both nature and fancy exceed.

No daisy, nor sweet blushing rose,
Not all the gay flowers of the field,
Not Tweed, gliding gently through those,
Such beauty and pleasure does yield.

The warblers are heard in the grove,
The linnet, the lark, and the thrush ;
The blackbird and sweet cooing dove,
With music enchant every bush.

Come, let us go forth to the mead,
Let us see how the primroses spring ;
We'll lodge in some village on Tweed,
And love while the feather'd folk sing.
. . . . . .
Say, charmer, where do thy flocks stray ?
Oh, tell me at morn where they feed ?
Shall I seek them on sweet winding Tay ?
Or the pleasanter banks of the Tweed ?"

The tradition is that this song of Crawford's was written in honour of Mary Lilias Scott, a very beautiful woman, known as "the Second Flower of Yarrow." Crawford has contributed another song to the minstrelsy of the Tweed. This is a new set of verses to the old air of *Cowden-knowes*.[1] It is one of his finest ; simple and natural in feeling and associations, and free, in a great measure, from the mannerism of the time :—

[1] *Tea-Table Miscellany*, ii. 150, where it is simply marked "C." Herd attributes it to William Crawford.

"When summer comes, the swains on Tweed
Sing their successful loves;
Around, the ewes and lambkins feed,
And music fills the groves.

But my loved song is then the broom
So fair on Cowden-knowes;
For sure so sweet, so soft a bloom
Elsewhere there never grows.

. . . . . .

Not Teviot braes, so green and gay,
May with this broom compare;
Not Yarrow banks in flowery May,
Nor the bush aboon Traquair.

More pleasing far are Cowden-knowes,
My peaceful happy home,
Where I was wont to milk my ewes,
At eve among the broom."

"The original ballad of *The Broom of Cowden-knowes*" is given by Scott in the *Minstrelsy*.[1] Both tune and words are old. The *Tea-Table Miscellany* has a set of words with the initials R. S., but it is inferior to Crawford's version. And it should be added that Crawford has entirely purified the coarseness of the old ballad. In this he follows quite the spirit of the older songs of Tweedside, which, with the somewhat qualified exception of the original version of *The Broom of the Cowden-knowes*, are lyrics of exceeding purity.

Among those who contributed to Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724) was a youth of twenty, of great and early promise, and of Jacobite leanings—the son of an Ayrshire laird, William Hamilton of Bangour (born 1704, died 1754). His *Poems on Several Occasions* were first

[1] iii. 37, ed. 1868.

published in Glasgow, without the author's knowledge, in 1748, and were printed at the famous Foulis press. Hamilton was a man of taste and feeling; but he was deeply imbued with the artificial spirit of the time, which, instead of looking at nature directly and with fresh eye, made a point of describing it in traditional, unreal, and generally inappropriate language. This sort of diction was equally applicable or equally inapplicable to the aspects of nature, whether these belonged to a southern or a northern clime, to the wooded banks of the soft gliding Thames, or the bare haughs and hills of the speeding and sparkling Tweed.

There are, however, here and there in his writings descriptive pieces which rise above this level. One of these, curiously enough, is a picture of winter on Tweedside and on "the tops of Yair," which unquestionably suggested to Scott the very fine description of the same which he has given us in the Introduction to canto i. of *Marmion*. Here are Hamilton's lines; these, it will be observed, are in the octavo syllabic metre adopted by Scott:—

"For see the Summer posts away,
Sad emblem of our own decay.
Now Winter from the frozen north,
Drives his stiff irón chariot forth;
His grisly hand in icy chains
Fair Tueda's silver flood constrains:
Cast up thy eyes, how bleak and bare
He wanders on the tops of Yair;
Behold, his footsteps dire are seen
Confess'd on ev'ry withering green!
Griev'd at the sight, when thou shalt see
A snowy wreath to clothe each tree."[1]

[1] Ode iii.

Now let us hear what Sir Walter made of this hint. (The lines are well known, but I quote them for the sake of comparison):—

"No longer Autumn's glowing red
Upon our Forest hills is shed;
No more, beneath the evening beam,
Fair Tweed reflects their purple gleam;
Away hath passed the heather-bell
That bloomed so rich on Needpath Fell;
Sallow his brow, and russet bare
Are now the sister heights of Yair.
The sheep before the pinching heaven
To shelter'd dale and down are driven,
Where yet some faded herbage pines,
And yet a watery sunbeam shines;
In meek despondency they eye
The wither'd sward and wintry sky,
And, far beneath their summer hill,
Stray sadly by Glenkinnon's rill:
The shepherd shifts his mantle's fold,
And wraps him closer from the cold;
His dogs no merry circles wheel,
But, shivering, follow at his heel;
A cowering glance they often cast,
As deeper moans the gathering blast."

It will, I think, be allowed that the latter minstrel has, in richness and minuteness of pictorial power, far outstripped the earlier poet. Scott shows a courage and freedom in dealing with the familiar objects around him, and introducing them into his picture, which the earlier poet, bound as he was to abstract and conventional representation, would hardly have dreamed of.

There is one occasion on which Hamilton rises to a true and powerful grasp of the scene, in a description of the Rhone and the Aar:—

> "More rapid rolls the Rhone, tumultuous flood,
> All raging unwithheld and unwithstood;
> In vain or fertile fields invite its stay,
> In vain or roughest rocks oppose its way;
> It bounds o'er all, and, insolent of force,
> Still hurries headlong on a downward course."

There is a very strong and truthful picture of the scene in these lines, and the flow of the feeling is reflected in the rhythm of the verse.

But, amid the generally vague verbiage of his descriptions, one effort of his genius stands out in vividness of human colouring, in depth and simplicity of feeling, and even to some extent in powerful and characteristic touches of scenery. This is a poem which owes its inspiration to the Yarrow. In fact it was suggested by the older poem of *The Dowie Dens.* It breathes the soul of the place, and it is so permeated by the spirit of its history and traditions that, when all the other writings of the author shall have fallen into oblivion, there will still be a nook in memory and a place in men's hearts for *The Braes of Yarrow.* The burden of the ballad is a fine tragic incident, and it touches deeply our primary human emotions. It is the story of a maiden on the Yarrow who loved a youth; but he fell in single fight, by the hand of a Tweedside laird, who would fain gain the love of the maiden whose betrothed he had slain. The old wail of *The Douglas Tragedy* and of *The Dowie Dens* was sounding in the ear of the susceptible poet when he wrote the stanzas; and there can, I think, be as little doubt that the same wail, echoing and re-echoing through the years, and intensified through the passionate feeling with which Hamilton of Bangour transmitted it onwards, was felt in the

soul of Scott when he conceived the heart-stirring tragedy of *The Bride of Lammermoor;* and not less in the heart of Wordsworth, both when he imaged and when he saw the Yarrow.

In "the Ancient Scottish Manner"[1] Hamilton carries on the story by alternate dialogue, the most picturesque form of narrative poetry. In the opening stanzas the Tweedside wooer, the slayer of him whom the maiden loved, thus addresses her:—

A. "'Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny, bonny bride,
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow!
Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny, bonny bride,
And think nae mair on the braes of Yarrow.'

B. 'Where gat ye that bonny, bonny bride?
Where gat ye that winsome marrow?'

A. 'I gat her where I daurna weil be seen,
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.

B. 'Why does she weep, thy bonny, bonny bride,
Why does she weep, thy winsome marrow?
And why dare ye nae mair weil be seen
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow?'

A. 'Lang maun she weep, lang maun she, maun she weep,
Lang maun she weep with dule and sorrow,
And lang maun I nae mair weil be seen
Pu'ing the birks on the braes of Yarrow.

For she has tint her luver, luver dear,
Her luver dear, the cause of sorrow,
And I hae slain the comeliest swain
That e'er pu'd birks on the braes o' Yarrow.'

. . . . . .

C. 'Sweet smells the birk, green grows, green grows the grass,
Yellow on Yarrow's braes the gowan,
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
Sweet the wave of Yarrow flowan.'

---

[1] "*The Braes of Yarrow*, to Lady Jane Home, in imitation of the ancient Scottish manner."—Hamilton of Bangour's *Poems*, 67.

A. 'Flows Yarrow sweet? as sweet, as sweet flows Tweed,
As green its grass, its gowan as yellow;
As sweet smells on its braes the birk,
The apple frae the rock as mellow.

Fair was thy luve, fair, fair indeed thy luve,
In flowery bands thou him did'st fetter,
Tho' he was fair and weil beluv'd again,
Than me, he never lu'ed thee better.

Busk ye, then busk, my bonny, bonny bride,
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow,
Busk ye, and lu'e me on the banks of Tweed,
And think nae mair on the braes of Yarrow.'"

She answers:—

C. "'How can I busk a bonny, bonny bride,
How can I busk a winsome marrow,
How lu'e him on the banks of Tweed,
That slew my luve on the braes of Yarrow?

O Yarrow fields, may never, never rain,
No dew thy tender blossoms cover,
For there was basely slain my luve,
My luve, as he had not been a luver.

The boy put on his robes, his robes of green,
His purple vest, 'twas my ain sewing,
Ah! wretched me! I little, little ken'd
He was in these to meet his ruin.

The boy took out his milk-white, milk-white steed,
Unheedful of my dule and sorrow,
But e'er the to-fall of the night
He lay a corpse on the Braes of Yarrow.'"

Then again, as if in a wild burst of despair she had consented to accept the murderer of her youthful lover, she says:—

C. "'Yes, yes, prepare the bed, the bed of luve,
With bridal sheets my body cover;
Unbar, ye bridal maids, the door,
Let in the expected husband lover.

But who the expected husband, husband is?
His hands, methinks, are bathed in slaughter.
Ah, me! what ghastly spectre's yon,
Come, in his pale shroud, bleeding after?

Pale as he is, here lay him, lay him down,
O lay his cold head on my pillow;
Take aff, take aff these bridal weids,
And crown my careful head with willow!

Pale tho' thou art, yet best, yet best belov'd,
O could my warmth to life restore thee,
Ye'd lie all night between my briests,—
No youth lay ever there before thee.

Pale, pale indeed! O lovely, lovely youth,
Forgive, forgive so foul a slaughter;
And lie all night between my briests,—
No youth shall ever lie there after.'"

In a piece so exquisite as this, it seems almost profanity to hint a blot. But there can be no doubt that the fine line—

"Fair hangs the apple frae the rock"—

is marred by conventionalism. "The apple" here is simply "the rowan," but the prevailing taste of the time did not allow the poet to express directly and truthfully the real object; yet would the line have been better, even in rhythm, had the author been true to fact, and sung:—

"Fair hangs the rowan frae the rock."

Scott evidently caught Hamilton's suggestion here; for,

in reference to the same locality, he says with simple, truthful literalness :—

> "Yon lonely Thorn—would he could tell
> The changes of his parent dell—
> How broad the shadows of the oak,
> How clung the rowan to the rock,
> And through the foliage show'd his head,
> With narrow leaves and berries red."

Hogg says of Hamilton :—

> "Bangour the daring task essay'd,
> Not half the chords his fingers play'd ;
> Yet even then some thrilling lays
> Bespoke the Harp of ancient days."

Robert Fergusson, who was born in 1751, and died in 1774, at the early age of twenty-four, sang of the Tweed in his poem *The Rivers of Scotland*. Fine genius as he was, he has but caught some echoes of the theme, and his whole description is vague and characterless. But in *Hame Content*, a satire, he has touched the true soul of Scottish scenery and music, and done much greater justice to Bangour than Hogg did. There is a strong outburst of the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*, excusable in a poet :—

> "The Arno and the Tiber lang
> Hae run full clear in Roman sang ;
> But, save the reverence o' the schools,
> They're baith but lifeless, dowie pools,
> Dought they compare wi' bonny Tweed,
> As clear as ony lammer[1] bead ?
> Or are their shores mair sweet and gay
> Than Fortha's haughs, or banks of Tay ?

[1] Amber.

Though there the herds can jink the showers,
'Mang thriving vines and myrtle bowers,
And blaw the reed to kittle strains,
While echo's tongue commends their pains ;
Like ours, they canna warm the heart
Wi' simple, saft, bewitching art.
On Leader Haughs and Yarrow Braes,
Arcadian herds wad tyne their lays,
To hear the mair melodious sounds
That live on our poetic grounds.

Come, Fancy ! come, and let us tread
The simmer's flowery velvet bed,
And a' your springs delightful lowse
On Tweda's bank or Cowden-knowes.
That, ta'en wi' thy enchanting sang,
Our Scottish lads may round thee thrang,
Sae pleased they'll never fash again
To court you on Italian plain ;
Soon will they guess ye only wear
The simple garb o' nature here.

O Bangour ! now the hills and dales
Nae mair gie back thy tender tales !
The birks on Yarrow now deplore
Thy mournfu' muse has left the shore.
Near what bright burn or crystal spring
Did you your winsome whistle hing ?
The Muse shall there, wi' watery e'e,
Gie the dunk swaird a tear for thee ;
And Yarrow's genius, dowie dame !
Shall then forget her bluid-stained stream,
On thy sad grave to seek repose,
Who mourned her fate, condoled her woes."

We now come to a very remarkable family group, who have contributed to the minstrelsy of the Borders. During the early part of the sixteenth century, the Elliots appeared in Liddesdale, probably as retainers of the Douglases. They had their principal seats at

Lariston, beneath the high and wide-spreading fells of that wild and fascinating region, and at Redheugh on the Hermitage Water. Other places in Liddesdale were held by dependants of their name, as Park, and Copshaw. They were among the most noted of the Borderers for rude energy, rapine, and deadly feud. On the decay of the Douglases, the Elliots sided with the Scotts against the Kerrs, besides, doubtless, doing a good deal of business for their own hand. There was the fight near Melrose, in July 1526, for the rescue of the person of James V. from Angus, in which the Elliots are found allied with the Scotts:—

> "When Home and Douglas in the van
> Bore down Buccleuch's retiring clan,
> Till gallant Cessford's heart-blood dear
> Reek'd on dark Elliot's Border spear."

The Elliots were more fortunate than their Liddesdale compeers, the Armstrongs; for while the latter have quite disappeared as landed men, the former passed over into Teviotdale, and succeeded in obtaining a hold of lands there. They now occupy the ancient possessions mainly of the Turnbulls and the Rutherfords, names once of the greatest territorial importance. For, while Minto and Bedrule were originally the property of the Turnbulls, Wells was not less the territory of the Rutherfords. The Elliot stock of Lariston and Redheugh was represented by the family of Stobs, and a cadet of Stobs, one Gavin Elliot, was laird and miller of Midlem Mill, on the water of Ale, in the seventeenth century. Towards the end of that century, Gilbert Elliot, younger son of Gavin of Midlem Mill, became a writer in Edinburgh,

afterwards passed at the Scottish Bar, rose to be a Lord of Session, and purchased the estate of Minto; was finally made a Baronet in 1700. Since then the vitality of the family has found outlet in law, statesmanship, as well as in arms, and hardly less in culture and in song. Sir Gilbert Elliot, the second baronet of Minto, born in 1693, followed his father's profession, and became Lord Justice-Clerk of Scotland. He was an accomplished Italian scholar, and was the author of the following pleasing verses in that language, written to the old Scottish tune of *The Yellow Hair'd Laddie,* itself supposed to be a production of Rizzio. There is a decided flavour of the Forest about them:—

"Veduto in prato
Il mio pastor,
Il crin coronato,
D'un serto di fior.

Il sole negli occhi,
La Fide nel sen'.
Ah! dove s' asconde?
Il caro mio ben'!

Al bosco, al monte,
La cereo in van,
E, presso al Fonte,
Non trove ch' il can;

Ah! cane Fedele
Deh! dimmi perche,
Il mio crudele
S' asconde di me?"

"In the meadow I saw him,
My shepherd, my own,
He wore on his forehead
Of sweet flowers a crown.

In his eyes was the sunshine,
Faith's home was his breast.
Ah! where is he hiding?
My loved one, my best!

By stream, grove, and mountain,
I sought him in vain;
I found his dog Fido!
I found not my swain.

Ah! Fido! dear Fido!
Come tell me, I pray,
Why my cruel one shuns me,
What keeps him away?"[1]

The talents of the second baronet were transmitted to his eldest son, while his genius and taste shone even more

[1] See *Border Memories*, 154, by W. Riddell Carre, Esq.

brightly in his third daughter, Jean. The former, also Sir Gilbert, passed advocate in 1743, but devoted himself mainly to political life. He was for long member of Parliament for Roxburghshire, and Treasurer of the Navy, a man expert and sagacious in affairs, and distinguished by literary taste. He was the author of the well-known pastoral lyric in the manner of Shenstone:—

"My sheep I neglected, I lost my sheep-hook,
And all the gay haunts of my youth I forsook;
No more for Amynta fresh garlands I wove;
For ambition, I said, would soon cure me of love.

Oh! what had my youth with ambition to do?
Why left I Amynta? Why broke I my vow?
Oh, give me my sheep, and my sheep-hook restore,
And I'll wander from love and Amynta no more.

Through regions remote in vain do I rove,
And bid the wide ocean secure me from love!
Oh, fool! to imagine that aught could subdue
A love so well founded, a passion so true!

Alas! 'tis too late at thy fate to repine;
Poor shepherd, Amynta can never be thine:
Thy tears are all fruitless, thy wishes are vain,
The moments neglected return not again."

This is the song to which Scott has referred in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, when, speaking of Minto Crags, he says:—

"Cliffs which for many a later year
The warbling Doric reed shall hear,
When some sad swain shall teach the grove,
Ambition is no cure for love."

The third baronet died in 1777, and his son, the distinguished Governor-General of India, was created first Baron of Minto in 1797, and first Earl in 1814.

But it is to Jean Elliot, the sister of the author of this lyric, and third daughter of Sir Gilbert,[1] the writer of the Italian song, that we owe something which we can never repay, and for which countless generations will bless her —one, and that the most delightful, version of *The Flowers of the Forest*:—

"I've heard them liltin', at the ewe-milkin',
Lasses a-liltin' before the dawn of day;
But now they are moanin' on ilka green loanin';[2]
The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

At bughts, in the mornin', nae blythe lads are scornin',
The lasses are lonely and dowie and wae;
Nae daffin', nae gabbin', but sighin' and sabbin',
Ilk ane lifts her leglin,[3] and hies her away.

In ha'rst, at the shearin', nae youths now are jeerin';
The bandsters are lyart, and runkled, and gray;
At fair, or at preachin', nae wooin', nae fleechin',[4]
The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

At e'en in the gloamin', nae younkers are roamin'
'Bout stacks wi' the lasses at bogle to play;
But ilk maid sits drearie, lamentin' her dearie—
The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away.

Dule and wae for the order sent our lads to the Border!
The English, for ance, by guile wan the day;
The Flowers of the Forest, that foucht aye the foremost,
The prime o' our land, are cauld in the clay.

We'll hear nae mair liltin' at the ewe-milkin',
Women and bairns are heartless and wae;
Sighin' and moanin' on ilka green loanin'—
The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away."

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[1] While the brothers and sisters of Jean Elliot are carefully mentioned in Burke's *Peerage* (ed. 1893), Jean herself is ignored. Who is responsible for this omission?

[2] The green path to the out-field pasture, hence the pasture-field itself.

[3] Milk-pail.

[4] Flattering.

Of the authoress of these lines we know but little. She was born at Minto House, in Teviotdale, the seat of the family, in 1727, and she died in 1805 at Mount Teviot, then in the occupation of her brother, Admiral Elliot. She lived and died unmarried, greatly devoted to her father. She is described as possessing "a sensible face, a slender, well-shaped figure. In manner grave and reserved to strangers. In her conversation she made no attempts at wit, and, though possessed of imagination, she never allowed it to entice her from the strictest rules of veracity. She had high aristocratic notions, which she took no pains to conceal." This is the writing of one intimately acquainted with Miss Elliot. She evidently led a simple and uneventful spinster life, spent chiefly in Brown Square, Edinburgh, not far from the town residence of her family, Minto House.[1] She knew Sir Walter Scott from his boyhood, and was his intimate friend to her death. She had an early insight into his genius, and anticipated his fame. She lived to see the publication of *The Eve of St John* and the *Minstrelsy*, in which Scott gave a place to her set of *The Flowers of the Forest*. As a girl she doubtless read *The Gentle Shepherd*, and *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* appeared a few months before her death. Her life thus linked together the two characteristic epochs of Allan Ramsay and Walter Scott.

The occasion of the composition of *The Flowers of the Forest* was this: When a young woman, Miss Elliot was riding home in a carriage after nightfall to Minto House, from a party, with her brother Gilbert; the conversation

[1] *Border Memories*, 160.

turned on Flodden, that disaster which left a sadness on the hearts of Scotsmen and Scotswomen for three hundred years. The brother suggested to the sister, not perhaps believing much in her capacity for it, that this was a fitting subject for a song. She leant backwards in the carriage, and there, under the shadow of the nightfall, with the old refrain, "The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away," sounding in her ear, as a stray echo from the past, and mingling in fancy with the scenery of her life and love, and under the kindling of her true human heart, she framed *The Flowers of the Forest;* that immortal lyric, in which simple natural pictures of joy and sadness are so exquisitely blended and contrasted—in which pathos of heart and patriotism of spirit, and a music that echoes the plaintive sough of the Border waters, passed, as it were spontaneously, into one consummate outburst of song.

The other version of *The Flowers of the Forest* is due to Alison Rutherford, daughter of Robert Rutherford of Fernilee, the scion of an old Border house, Rutherford of Hundalee. The Rutherfords now are mainly decayed, but they are still represented by Fairnington and Edgerstone. Miss Rutherford became the wife of Patrick Cockburn, advocate, youngest son of Adam Cockburn, the Lord Justice-Clerk of Scotland, and brother of John Cockburn of Ormiston. She was born at Fernilee House, by the Tweed, in Selkirkshire, in 1712, and she died in 1794, at the age of eighty-two. Her song is probably a little older than that of Miss Elliot. It appears to have been printed in 1765, but probably it was written at a considerably earlier period, some twelve years before we

have any traces of Miss Elliot's song, the date of which was about 1756. The lines are household words, yet a notice of the poetry of the Borders demands the insertion of the song in full:—

"I've seen the smiling
Of fortune beguiling,
I've felt all its favours, and found its decay;
Sweet was its blessing,
Kind its caressing,
But now it is fled—fled far far away.
I've seen the Forest
Adornèd the foremost,
With flowers of the fairest, most pleasant and gay;
Sae bonny was their blooming!
Their scents the air perfuming!
But now they are wither'd, and wede all away.

I've seen the morning,
With gold the hills adorning,
In loud tempest storming, before middle day;
I've seen Tweed's silver stream,
Shining in the sunny beam,
Grow drumly and dark, as it roll'd on its way.
O fickle Fortune!
Why this cruel sporting?
Oh, why thus torment us, poor sons of a day?
Nae mair your smiles can cheer me,
Nae mair your frowns can fear me,
For the Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away."

There is a copy of *The Flowers of the Forest* in Mrs Cockburn's handwriting. The lines were given to Lady Helen Hall by Mrs Cockburn. The handwriting is neat, precise, and comparatively firm. On the back is—

"This given to me, H. H.,—soon after I married,—by old Mrs Cockburn, the lady who was the author." Addressed "Lady Helen Hall."

The following is a copy:—

"Flowers of the Forrest,
for Lady Helen Hall.

1.

I've seen the smileing of Fortune beguileing
I've felt all its favours and found its decay
Sweet was its blessing kind its carressing
But now it is fled fled far far away.
I've seen the Forrest adorned the formost
With flowers of the fairest most pleasant and gay
Sae bonny was their blooming their scents the air perfuming
But now they are withered and wade all away.

2.

I've seen the morning with gold the hills adorning
In loud Tempest storming befor midle day
I've seen Tweeds silver stream shining in the sunny beam
Grow drumly and dark as it rolld on its way.
O fickle Fortune why this cruel sporting
Why thus torment us poor sons of a day
Nae mair your smiles can cheer me nae mair your frowns can
fear me
For the Flowers of the Forrest are a wade away.

A real picture of the Authors feelings."[1]

This last line is very significant: it rather points to the view that the song was written from a feeling of financial catastrophe, and has reference to a pecuniary disaster which overtook the Forest lairds and farmers in last century. But that of Miss Elliot, both from the circumstance of its composition and its special allusion, was certainly composed as a memory of Flodden. If a com-

[1] Copied from photograph in possession of Miss Russell of Ashiesteel, kindly allowed by her to be printed in this volume.

parison might be made between the two songs—both exquisite in themselves—it might be said that Miss Elliot's song has far more of local allusion, and contains many brief and touching pictures of the simple manners of the country-side; whereas Mrs Cockburn's song, beautifully finished as it is, and notwithstanding its thoroughly truthful allusion to the change from gay to grave, as often symbolised in the daily flow of the Tweed, has, except in spirit, less of the character of a native production.

Both these songs owed part of their inspiration to the old tune of *The Flowers of the Forest*, which is to be found in the collection of John Skene of Hallyards, written between 1615 and 1620. To this tune there was a song as old as about the date of the battle of Flodden. The writers of both the modern versions must have known the ancient tune, and fragments of the earlier song. The line,

"I have heard them liltin' at the ewes milkin',"

and the refrain,

"The Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away,"

are ancient. There is also a picturesque and touching line of the old song, which brings back past manners in a most pathetic image:—

"I ride single on my saddle,
For the Flowers of the Forest are a' wede away."

John Armstrong, M.D., son of the minister of Castleton, in Liddesdale, was born in 1709, and died in 1779.

A physician by profession, he embarked on a literary life in London, was the friend of Thomson and of Mallet, and wrote, among other poems, *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744). In his description of angling in this poem, he recurs with great fondness and feeling to the scenes of his youthful days on the banks of the Liddel:—

> "The crystal rivulet, that o'er
> A stony channel rolls its rapid maze,
> Swarms with the silver fry. Such, through the bounds
> Of pastoral Stafford, runs the brawling Trent;
> Such Eden, sprung from Cumbrian mountains; such
> The Esk, o'erhung with woods; and such the stream
> On whose Arcadian banks I first drew air,
> Liddel; till now except in Doric lays
> Tuned to her murmurs by her love-sick swains,
> Unknown in song, though not a purer stream,
> Through meads more flowery, more romantic groves,
> Rolls towards the western main. Hail, sacred flood!
> May still thy hospitable swains be blessed
> In rural innocence; thy mountains still
> Teem with the fleecy race; thy tuneful woods
> For ever flourish; and thy vales look gay
> With painted meadows and the golden grain!
> Oft, with thy blooming sons, when life was new,
> Sportive and petulant, and charmed with toys,
> In thy transparent eddies have I laved:
> Oft traced with patient steps thy fairy banks,
> With the well-imitated fly to hook
> The eager trout, and with the slender line
> And yielding rod solicit to the shore
> The struggling panting prey; while vernal clouds
> And tepid gales obscured the ruffled pool,
> And from the depths called forth the wanton swarms."

William Julius Mickle, born 1743, died 1788, was the son of the minister of Langholm. There he spent the first twelve years of his life. It is interesting to

find that, after a checkered career in England and abroad, the translator of *The Lusiad,* and the author of *Cumnor Hall,* fondly returned in imagination, towards the close of his life, to the haunts of his boyhood by the waters of the Esk and the Ewes. The last production of his muse was *Eskdale Braes.* The feeling for the scenery of these dales is true, tender, and full. In this respect the poem is so modern in tone as to rank as a very close precursor of the latest lyrics of the Borders :—

"By the banks of the crystal-stream'd Esk,
Where the Wauchope her yellow wave joins,
Where the lambkins on sunny braes bask,
And wild woodbine the shepherd's bower twines,

Maria, disconsolate maid!
Oft sighed the still noontide away,
Or by moonlight all desolate strayed,
While woeful she tuned her love lay:

Ah, no more from the banks of the Ewes,
My shepherd comes cheer'ly along,
Broomholm and the Deansbanks refuse
To echo the plaints of his song.

No more from the echoes of Ewes,
His dog fondly barking I hear;
No more the tired lark he pursues,
And tells me his master draws near.

Ah, woe to the wars and the pride,
Thy heroes, O Esk, could display,
When with laurels they planted thy side,
From France and from Spain borne away.

Oh, why did their honours decoy
My poor shepherd lad from the shore;
Ambition bewitch'd the vain boy,
And oceans between us now roar.

Ah, methinks his pale corse floating by,
I behold on the rude billows tost;
Unburied his scattered bones lie,
Lie bleaching on some desert coast.

By this stream of the May-blossomed thorn,
That first heard his love-tale and his vows,
My pale ghost shall wander forlorn,
And the willow shall weep o'er my brows.

With the ghosts of the Waas will I wail,
In Warblaw woods join the sad throng,
To Hallow E'en's blast tell my tale,
As the spectres, ungraved, glide along.

Still the Ewes rolls her paly blue stream,
Old Esk still his crystal tide pours,
Still golden the Wauchope waves gleam,
And still green, O Broomholm, are thy bowers.

No; blasted they seem to my view,
The rivers in red floods combine;
The turtles their widow'd notes coo,
And mix their sad ditties with mine.

Discolour'd in sorrow's dim shade,
All nature seems with me to mourn—
Straight the village-bells merrily play'd,
And announced her dear Jamie's return.

The woodlands all May-blown appear,
The silver streams murmur new charms,
As, smiling, her Jamie drew near,
And all eager sprung in to her arms."

This song is somewhat laboured, and deficient in ease of turn; but the fusion of the love emotion with the aspects of nature, their mutual colouring and transfiguration, strongly forecast the peculiar character of the nineteenth-century love-lyrics of Scotland. It is, in a word, the spirit of Tannahill, without the perfection of his art.

The natural spirit comes first; and expression has to grow to finish through the years.

The Rev. John Logan was a contemporary of Mickle. He was born at Soutra, in the parish of Fala, on the southern extremity of Mid-Lothian, in 1748. He was one of the ministers of Leith from 1773 to 1786, when he resigned his charge, and settled in London. He died in 1788. In 1770 appeared *Poems on Several Occasions by Michael Bruce,* under the editorship of Logan, though his name was not given. Of the poems in this volume, Logan ultimately claimed as his own the story of Levinia, the Ode to Paoli, and the Cuckoo. The authorship of the last—one of the most exquisite poems in the language—is still a matter of controversy between the friends of Bruce and Logan.

Logan, like Hamilton of Bangour, caught inspiration from the Yarrow. It is the same strain of disappointed love. The loss of the lover in Logan's *Braes of Yarrow,* as in *Willie's Rare and Willie's Fair,* is due to the accident of drowning in the troubled and flooded stream. We have here also an illustration of how the Yarrow may appear joyous to the gladsome heart, and sad to the saddened spirit:—

"Thy braes were bonny, Yarrow stream!
When first on them I met my lover;
Thy braes, how dreary, Yarrow stream!
When now thy waves his body cover!

For ever now, O Yarrow stream!
Thou art to me a stream of sorrow;
For never on thy banks shall I
Behold my love, the flower of Yarrow."

Then comes a stanza which, for directness and vividness of suggestion—not speaking to the ear, but telling the incident to the imagination—is one of the most finished and impressive in poetry:—

"His mother from the window looked,
With all the longing of a mother;
His little sister weeping walk'd
The green-wood path to meet her brother;

They sought him east, they sought him west,
They sought him all the forest thorough;
They only saw the cloud of night,
They only heard the roar of Yarrow!"[1]

There were two men in last century who, though not natives of the Border land, have yet referred to it in poetry. The first name is that of an English clergyman, who has taken a place among the classical poets of Britain—at least his works are published in the series of one hundred volumes of the British poets. I refer to the Rev. John Langhorne. He was born at Kirby Stephen in 1735, and died at Blagdon in Somersetshire, of which he was rector, in 1779.

Churchill had attacked Lord Bute and Scotland in his *Prophecy of Famine.* To counteract, if possible, the sarcasm of the *Prophecy*, Langhorne published, in 1763, *Genius and Valour, a Scottish Pastoral*, which he inscribed to Lord Bute, "as a tribute of respect from an impartial Englishman." Principal Robertson, three years after the publication, sent to Langhorne a complimentary letter,

[1] But it seems probable that this last stanza is from an old ballad. See above, ii. 203.

with a diploma of the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Edinburgh.[1]

Genius and Valour has the usual defects of the time; it abounds in vague epithets and generalised phraseology that have no special application to the natural scenes described. Still, the poet has caught something of the echo of the places referred to, and their traditions. One or two lines will suffice as specimens:—

> "Where Tweed's fair streams in liberal beauty lie,
> And Flora laughs beneath a lucid sky;
> Long winding vales where crystal waters lave,
> Where blithe birds warble and where green woods wave,
> A bright-hair'd shepherd in young beauty's bloom,
> Tuned his sweet pipe behind the yellow broom."

These lines sound well; but that is all that is meritorious about them. There is in such lines as these really not one characteristic epithet of the Tweed. They are an example simply of a mixture or make-up of certain approved ingredients for river scenery.

Langhorne does much better when he refers with manly indignation to the atrocities of the days of the Restoration—that cruellest, basest, and foulest time of English history:—

> "When through thy fields destructive rapine spread,
> Nor sparing infant's tears, nor hoary head;
> In those dread days the unprotected swain
> Mourned on the mountains o'er his wasted plain;
> Nor longer vocal with the shepherd's lay
> Were Yarrow banks or groves of Endermay."

His reference to Thomson—the author of *The Seasons*—who was brought up on the banks of the Tweed and

[1] *British Poets, Langhorne*, lxv. 12.

the Jed, and imbibed his love of nature there, and on the slopes of the Cheviots, is well turned:—

"Soon wandering fearless many a muse was seen
On the dun mountain and the wild wood green;
Soon, to the warblings of the pastoral reed,
Started sweet echoes from the shores of Tweed.
O favoured stream, where thy fair current flows,
The child of nature, gentle Thomson, rose!
Young as he wander'd on thy flowery side,
With simple joy to see thy bright waves glide,
Thither in all thy native charms array'd
From climes remote the sister Seasons stray'd."

With all Langhorne's sweetness of versification, the Ettrick Shepherd formed a very fair estimate of him when he said:—

"Langhorne arriv'd from southern dale,
And chimed his notes on Yarrow vale;
They would not, could not touch the heart—
His was the modish lyre of art."

Alexander Geddes, LL.D., the son of a small farmer in Banffshire, was born in 1737, and he died in 1802. He was educated for the Roman Catholic priesthood, and in 1765 became chaplain in the family of the sixth Earl of Traquair. The tradition is that a romantic attachment sprang up between the chaplain and one of the daughters of the house. But the lover sacrificed himself for the priest, and he left Traquair for France, where he prosecuted for a time his linguistic and critical studies. Geddes was a man of remarkable scholarly accomplishments, and greatly too liberal in his theological opinions for the authorities of his Church. Among other writings, he

published two volumes of a translation of the Bible in 1792 and 1797. The family of Traquair continued to befriend him during a somewhat checkered career. In 1781 he paid a visit to Charles, the seventh earl, at Traquair House, and there wrote a poem entitled *Linton, a Tweeddale Pastoral*, in honour of the birth of a son and heir to the noble house. This son—Charles, Lord Linton—succeeded his father as eighth earl in 1827, and died in 1861, when the earldom and barony became dormant.

Dr Geddes is the author of the popular song *The Wee Wifukie*, and the fine Jacobite lyric *Lewie Gordon*. But neither Langhorne nor Geddes can be said to have added anything to the development of Tweedside poetry and song.

CHAPTER VIII.

MODERN PERIOD—LEYDEN, HOGG, AND SCOTT.

When, about the beginning of the century, Walter Scott was busy collecting the materials of the *Minstrelsy*, he made the acquaintance of a youth of kindred spirit with his own—John Leyden. Leyden entered into the work with characteristic enthusiasm, and contributed more perhaps than any other assistant of Scott to form the first two volumes of 1802. Leyden was a typical Scotsman—we may say a typical Borderer. His career from his birth in 1775, in the lowly cottage at Denholm, under the slopes of the rugged Ruberslaw, then darkly clothed with heather, to his death, in 1811, in Java, at the early age of thirty-six, is one of the most self-dependent, manly, and energetic on record. His was one of those "broken lives" with lofty promise and purpose unfulfilled, which add to the mysteries and unavailing regrets incidental to our present state. The muse of Scottish poetry and the muse of Eastern learning might equally mourn his untimely fate.

"His bright and brief career is o'er,
And mute his tuneful strains;

Quenched is his lamp of varied lore,
That loved the light of song to pour;
A distant and a deadly shore
Has Leyden's cold remains."

Or, as Hogg has finely said of him:—

"Sweet rung the harp to Logan's hand:
Then Leyden came from Border Land,
With dauntless heart and ardour high,
And wild impatience in his eye.
Though false his tones at times might be,
Though wild notes marr'd the symphony
Between, the flowing measure stole
That spoke the Bard's inspired soul.
Sad were those strains, when hymn'd afar,
On the green vales of Malabar:
O'er seas beneath the golden morn,
They travell'd, on the monsoon borne,
Thrilling the heart of Indian maid,
Beneath the wild banana's shade.
Leyden, a shepherd wails thy fate,
And Scotland knows her loss too late!"

Leyden made two contributions of Border ballads to the *Minstrelsy*—*Lord Soulis* and *The Cout of Keeldar*.[1] These were of the romantic type, and a true outcome of the old spirit. They were, besides, among the first of the modern Border ballads which showed that loving sympathy with the aspects of hill, stream, and glen, as objects of poetic interest, which has since become an independent element in the poetry of the district:—

"But onward, onward Keeldar past,
Swift as the winter wind,
When, hovering on the driving blast,
The snow flakes fall behind.

[1] iii. 249, 288.

They pass'd the muir of berries blae,
The stone cross on the lee ;
They reach'd the green, the bonny brae,
Beneath the birchen tree.

This is the bonny brae, the green,
Yet sacred to the brave,
Where still, of ancient size, is seen,
Gigantic Keeldar's grave.

The lonely shepherd loves to mark
The daisy springing fair,
Where weeps the birch of silver bark,
With long dishevell'd hair.

The grave is green, and round is spread
The curling lady-fern ;
That fatal day the mould was red,
No moss was on the cairn."

Leyden's chief poem is *The Scenes of Infancy,* laid mainly in Teviotdale, his native valley. Its references and descriptions are not, however, confined to the vale of the Teviot itself—some thirty miles of varied and picturesque country. These extend to the whole district anciently known as Teviotdale, the tract of country between the north-western watershed of the Teviot and the ridge of the Cheviots. The poem was finally revised for publication on the eve of his departure for India. It is deficient in connection and unity, but is, at the same time, of remarkable merit. The feelings and impressions of early boyhood, the stories and traditions he had learnt in youth, are fused with passages of local description of great vividness and power. He has an intensity of feeling which reminds one of Burns, and we see in him those influences of story and locality at work which subsequently nourished and developed to greater perfection

the genius of his more fortunate compeer and friend, Walter Scott.

The Fourth Part of the *Scenes* contains a passage too characteristic of the poet and the man to be passed over. On a morning in November 1790, when a lad of fifteen, he set out from his father's cottage at Denholm on a long day's journey to Edinburgh, to commence attendance on the classes of the University there, with a view to study for the Church. His father, a worthy farm-grieve, accompanied him half-way with a horse, which father and son rode alternately. Then the youth was left to finish the journey by himself on foot. He pursued his way alone, unaccompanied save by what only the future poet would have noticed—his own shadow. And thus, years afterwards, when the whole scene had become a pleasant memory, he beautifully alludes to the incident:—

"Once more, inconstant shadow! by my side
I see thee stalk with vast gigantic stride,
Pause when I stop, and when I careless bend
My steps, obsequiously their course attend;
So faithless friends, that leave the wretch to mourn,
Still with the sunshine of his days return;
Yet oft, since first I left these valleys green,
I, but for thee, companionless had been.
To thee I talk'd, nor felt myself alone,
While summer suns and living moonbeams shone.
Oft, while an infant, playful in the sun,
I hoped thy silent gambols to outrun,
And, as I viewed thee ever at my side,
To overleap thy hastening figure tried.
Oft, when with flaky snow the fields were white,
Beneath the moon I started at thy sight,
Ey'd thy huge stature with suspicious mien,
And thought I had my evil genius seen.

But when I left my father's old abode,
And thou the sole companion of my road,
As sad I paused, and fondly looked behind,
And almost deemed each face I met unkind,
While kindling hopes to boding fears gave place,
Thou seem'dst the ancient spirit of my race.
In startled Fancy's ear I heard thee say :
'Ha ! I will meet thee after many a day,
When youth's impatient joys, too fierce to last,
And fancy's wild illusions, all are past ;
Yes ! I will come when scenes of youth depart,
To ask thee for thy innocence of heart.'" [1]

Among his numerous local allusions, Leyden has noted a fact which is of the greatest interest to the student of the æsthetic feeling for nature, whether in Border or in British poetry. The eighteenth-century heartlessness and conventionalism, so far as any feeling for nature and truthfulness of description are concerned, are well known. One of the men who broke through the hollow style, and brought men face to face with the real outward world of sight and sound, and touched, too, not unfrequently on some of its finest lessons, was James Thomson, a son of the Scottish manse. His father, at first minister of Ednam on the Eden, in the Merse, was translated, while his son was still a boy, to Southdean, high up on the Jed, in the folds of the Cheviots. There the poet of *The Seasons* learned his love of free nature, saw the grandest things he has pictured, saw especially that winter storm which haunted his memory, until imagination idealised it years afterwards when he wrote on the banks of the Thames. It was thus that the life-blood of the Border country and the spirit of its scenery were poured into

[1] *Scenes of Infancy*, Part iv.

the sickly heart of the British poetry of nature. Leyden has sketched the rise of Thomson's genius in nervous verse, which shows the spirit of observation and fidelity to the outward aspect of things, characteristic of himself, as well as of the man whom he depicts :—

"To thee, fair Jed ! a holier wreath is due,
Who gav'st thy Thomson all thy scenes to view,
Bad'st forms of beauty on his vision roll,
And mould to harmony his ductile soul ;
Till Fancy's pictures rose, as nature bright,
And his warm bosom glowed with heavenly light.

In March, when first elate on tender wing,
O'er frozen heaths the lark essays to sing ;
In March, when first, before the lengthening days,
The snowy mantle of the earth decays,
The wreaths of crusted snows are painted blue,
And yellowy moss assumes a greener hue—
How smil'd the bard, from winter's funeral urn
To see more fair the youthful earth return !
When morn's wan rays with clearer crimson blend,
And first the gilded mists of spring ascend,
The sun-beams swim through April's silver showers,
The daffodils expand their yellow flowers,
The lusty stalk with sap luxuriant swells,
And, curling round it, smile the bursting bells,
The blowing king-cup bank and valley studs,
And on the rosiers nod the folded buds ;
Warm beats his heart to view the mead's array,
When flowers of summer hear the steps of May.

But, when the wintry blast the forest heaves,
And shakes the harvest of the ripen'd leaves ;
When brighter scenes the painted woods display
Than fancy's fairy pencil can portray,
He pensive strays, the sadden'd groves among,
To hear the twittering swallows' farewell song.
The finch no more on pointed thistle feeds,
Pecks the red leaves, or crops the swelling seeds ;

But water-crows by cold brook-margins play,
Lave their dark plumage in the freezing spray,
And, wanton, as from stone to stone they glide,
Dive at their beckoning forms beneath the tide.
He hears at eve the fetter'd bittern's scream,
Ice-bound in sedgy marsh, or mountain stream,
Or sees, with strange delight, the snow clouds form
When Ruberslaw conceives the mountain storm;
Dark Ruberslaw! that lifts his head sublime,
Rugged and hoary with the wrecks of time!
On his broad misty front the giant wears
The horrid furrows of ten thousand years;
His aged brows are crown'd with curling fern,
Where perches, grave and lone, the hooded Erne,
Majestic bird! by ancient shepherds styled
The lonely hermit of the russet wild,
That loves amid the stormy blast to soar,
When through disjointed cliffs the tempests roar,
Climbs on strong wing the storm, and, screaming high,
Rides the dim rack that sweeps the darken'd sky.

Such were the scenes his fancy first refin'd,
And breathed enchantment o'er his plastic mind,
Bade every feeling flow, to virtue dear,
And formed the poet of the varied year."[1]

Of the three greatest names in modern Border poetry —Leyden, Hogg, and Scott—Leyden is the earliest of the three; and he has made to it an important and characteristic contribution. He was the first fully to feel and to depict the power of the scenery of the Borders, whether the soft and tender, or the wild and grand, such as he found it in the haughs and hills, in the summer gleams, and the winter storms of his native Teviotdale. He was faithful to what he saw around him; he was bold enough to treat it as a self-sufficient object of poetic art. If the *Scenes of Infancy* be not a very finished or

[1] *Scenes of Infancy*, Part iii.

consecutive poem—rather a series of pictures and allusions, art working, too, upon a certain tumultuous feeling, of which it did not quite obtain the mastery—the poem is at least the courageous expression of a pure heart, a faithful observation, and a fine fancy revelling in a new and fresh field, which was rich in wealth and blessing for the future.

In the spring of 1813 there appeared a poem with the following dedication :—

"*TO*
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES,
A SHEPHERD
AMONG THE MOUNTAINS OF SCOTLAND
DEDICATES THIS POEM."

The shepherd in this act, somewhat boldly but not inappropriately, laid at the feet of high rank the offering of high genius; for the "poem" was none other than *The Queen's Wake.*

Although its author never acquired much art in constructing a story, or skill in depicting character, and his composition both in prose and verse is frequently disfigured by mean and coarse expressions, the Ettrick Shepherd yet stands out in this century as one of the Scotsmen of truest, finest native genius—filling a place in Scottish poetry which is unique, having done certain things which no other Scottish poet has done so well. Born in a cottage near Ettrick Kirk as early as 1770 —though he himself gives the year as 1772 — the

Shepherd, at the date of the dedication of *The Wake*, was forty-three; and it was not till now that his genius blossomed and fruited, never again in his life with such a wealth of poesy. Every Borderer ought to have a kindly word and a corner of admiration in his heart for James Hogg—man and poet. For when shall we see such another shepherd? There is not in all Border history a more complete type of a man of power nourished by the Border glens and streams, haughs and hills, story, ballad, and tradition, than he. There is no more complete example anywhere of the rise to intellectual eminence of a nearly entirely self-taught man. In this respect even Burns had advantages superior to his. Sent to herd ewes when he was but seven years old, he suffered all the hardships of *orra* farm-work till he was sixteen, when, with great pride, he attained to the dignity of a shepherd with a *hirsel*, and in this capacity he remained until he was thirty. In all that time he had but half a year's schooling, at desultory intervals—from which he carried away a little reading and a penmanship that could hardly be called penmanship. Hogg in fact taught himself to read, he taught himself to write, and he taught himself to rhyme; for, though the soul of poetry was in him from the beginning, he had at first a very imperfect sense of rhyme, and it was only after many trials and long and patient labour that he attained to "the accomplishment of verse"—strange as this may seem to those who know and feel the exquisite melody of many of his lines.

But, imperfect as his school instruction was, he had a source of education, and to him inspiration, which, to a

man of deep and impassioned soul, is the best of all. He had a noble mother—a good, true, and tender woman, assiduous in daily duty, with a freshness of heart and a quickness of head that brightened toil,—Margaret Laidlaw, let us record her name. From her he learned, and learned to feel, the legendary lore, story, tradition, song, and ballad of the district. This was the seed out of which his genius was ultimately, though slowly, developed. Hogg was potentially a poet from his mother's knee; the efforts of his life were simply a struggle for expression—a struggle hindered of earlier success owing to his imperfect schooling. Let us hear from himself what nourished his genius, and note its beauty, its truth, and its power:—

"O list the mystic lore sublime,
Of fairy tales of ancient time!
I learned them in the lonely glen,
The last abodes of living men,
Where never stranger came our way,
By summer night, or winter day;
Where neighbouring hind or cot was none—
Our converse was with heaven alone—
With voices through the clouds that sung,
And brooding storms that round us hung.
Oh, lady! judge, if judge ye may,
How stern and ample was the sway
Of themes like these when darkness fell,
And grey-haired sires the tale would tell!
When doors were barred, and elder dame
Plied at her task beside the flame
That through the smoke and gloom alone
On dim and umber'd faces shone—
The bleat of mountain goat on high
That from the cliff came quavering by;
The echoing rock, the rushing flood,
The cataract's swell, the moaning wood;

The undefined and mingled hum,
Voice of the desert, never dumb!
All these have left within this heart
A feeling tongue can ne'er impart;
A wildered and unearthly flame,
A something that's without a name."

The spring-time of his genius was the ten years from 1790 to 1800, when he herded at Blackhouse in the Douglas Burn, and had the advantage of the kindly sympathy, aid, and advice of his master's son—William Laidlaw—one who has left all too little for the lovers of simple pathos and the well-wishers of the Scottish muse. I like to picture Hogg at this period as he herded on the Hawkshaw Rig up the Douglas Burn—a dark heathery slope of the Blackhouse Heights, which divides the Blackhope Burn from the other main feeders of the Douglas. There, on a summer day, during these ten years, you would find on the hill a ruddy-faced youth, of middle height, of finely symmetrical and agile form, with beaming light-blue eyes and a profusion of light-brown hair that fell over his shoulders, long, fair, and lissome as a woman's. The time is between the middle of July and the middle of September, when his duty is to "summer the lambs." These had simply to be moved from place to place; and this was done by "Hector" or his successor—the Shepherd's collie and friend. Now was the opportunity of the shepherd-student. With the lambs quietly pasturing, he sets to work, produces a sheet or two of paper folded and stitched, has an inkhorn stuck in a hole of his waistcoat with a cork and a bit of twine, and a stump of a pen, and there he thinks out his verses, —writes them, in fact, all through on the tablet of memory,

and then commits the production which he has already finished and polished in his mind to paper. Is not thus the stanza which he addressed to trusty Hector in his old age most appropriate ?—

> "When gazing o'er the Lowland dales,
> Despondence on the breeze shall flee ;
> And muses leave their native vales
> To scale the clouds wi' you an' me."

What kind of poetic impulse and cast of genius was likely to come out of this ? Let us look at the surroundings. It is a lone wild scene this Hawkshaw Rig. The grains of the burn spread out on each side, like arms stretched upwards, to the dark overhanging and environing heights of Blackhouse, scored deep with peat-bogs, and suggestive of wild work of the winter wind and the winter night. These heights shut him in on the north and west, while on the east the benty moorland opens and widens to the head of the watershed of the Quair. There, on this moorland at the head of the Risp Syke, are the grey weird stones which mark the scene of the Douglas Tragedy. Below, in the valley of the Burn, as it sweeps to the Yarrow, is Blackhouse Tower, carrying the thought back along the checkered flow of Scottish story to the early kings, when, from that tower, or one on its site, the lord of the Douglas Burn rode to a Parliament of Malcolm Canmore. Awe and solitude, legendary tale, and the shadows of old memories, are all round about him. But there is also a sweet strange beauty, for the heather is in bloom, and there are numberless gentle birks down in the cleughs, and green spots of rare grassy beauty by the

burn-sides; and the many-branched feeders of the burn themselves make a soft, pulsing, intermittent sough and hum, that charms the ear and inclines the soul to tenderness and pathos and all gentle thoughts and feelings. It is as if soft beauty of sight and sound lay quiet at the heart of solitude and fear.

Now it was here, in these long summer days that extend from morn to gloamin', and amid similar scenes in Ettrick and in Yarrow, that this simple, untaught, yet impassioned shepherd lad, with his heart full of the lore his mother and grey-haired men had taught him, developed the peculiar cast of his poetic genius. It was thus he learned to love simple, free, solitary nature so intensely; it was thus that his heart soared with, and yearned after, the *Skylark* of a morning, and swelled into lyric passion of an evening "*when the kye comes hame*"; it was thus he learned to conceive those exquisite visions of Fairy and Fairyland which he has embodied in *Kilmeny*, to feel and express the power of the awful and weird in a way such as almost no modern poet has expressed them, as in *The Fate of MacGregor*, *The Abbot MacKinnon*, *The Witch of Fife*, and others—to revel, in a word, in a remote, ideal, supersensible, yet most ethereal beauty and grandeur, which has a spell we do not seek to analyse. Away in the Blackhouse glen, remote from man and human life, along with his bleating lambs and his dog, it is not wonderful that the Shepherd passed into and soared so high in the world of vision. May we not pardon the vaunting stanza of his old age:—

"I am a king! my regal sway
Stretches o'er Scotland's mountains high,

And o'er the fairy vales that lie
Beneath the glimpses of the moon,
Or round the ledges of the sky,
In twilight's everlasting noon."[1]

I have spoken of Hogg's intense feeling for simple nature, and of its power over him as a means of culture. Let us hear what he himself says on this point, and with what pictorial power the man who had only half a year's schooling wrote of scenes which hundreds of men had lived among, and felt, it may be, in their hearts, but could not embody in words:—

"The Bard on Ettrick's mountains green
In Nature's bosom nursed had been,
And oft had marked in forest lone
Her beauties on her mountain throne;
Had seen her deck the wild wood tree,
And star with snowy gems the lea;
In loveliest colours paint the plain,
And sow the moor with purple grain;
By golden mead and mountain sheer,
Had viewed the Ettrick waving clear,
Where shadowy flocks of purest snow
Seemed grazing in a world below.

Oft had he viewed, as morning rose,
The bosom of the lonely Lowes,
Ploughed far by many a downy keel,
Of wild-duck and of vagrant teal.
Oft thrilled the heart at close of even,
To see the dappled vales of Heaven,
With many a mountain, moor, and tree,
Asleep upon the St Mary;
The pilot swan majestic wind,
With all his cygnet fleet behind,
So softly sail and swiftly row,
With sable oar and silken prow.

[1] *Monitors*, 399.

Instead of war's unhallowed form,
His eye had seen the thunderstorm
Descend within the mountain's brim,
And shroud him in its chambers grim ;
Then from its bowels burst amain
The sheeted flame and sounding rain,
And by the bolts in thunder borne,
The heaven's own breast and mountain torn ;
The wild roe from the forest driven ;
The oaks of ages peeled and riven ;
Impending oceans whirl and boil,
Convulsed by nature's grand turmoil." [1]

What exquisite sweetness, melody, and truthfulness to nature have we here! It is the lyric at the close of *The Wake*:—

"The wreath lies on St Mary's shore ;
The mountain sounds are harsh and loud ;
The lofty brows of stern Clockmore
Are visored with the moving cloud.

But winter's deadly hues shall fade
On moorland bald and mountain shaw,
And soon the rainbow's lovely shade,
Sleep on the breast of Bowerhope Law ;

Then will the glowing suns of spring,
The genial shower and stealing dew,
Wake every forest bird to sing,
And every mountain flower renew.

But not the rainbow's ample ring,
That spans the glen and mountain gray,
Though fanned by western breezes' wing,
And sunned by summer's glowing ray,

To man decayed, can evermore
Renew the age of love and glee !
Can ever second spring restore
To my old mountain harp and me !

[1] *The Wake—Tenth Bard.*

But when the hue of softened green
Spreads over hill and lonely lea,
And lowly primrose opes unseen
Her virgin bosom to the bee;

When hawthorns breathe their odours far,
And carols hail the year's return;
And daisy spreads her silver star,
Unheeded, by the mountain burn;

Then will I seek the aged thorn,
The haunted wild and fairy ring,
Where oft thy erring numbers borne
Have taught the wandering winds to sing."

The following stanzas, from the Shepherd's *Address to his Auld Dog Hector*, show the tender inner spirit of the man, and are not unworthy of Burns:—

"Come, my auld, towzy, trusty friend,
What gars ye look sae dung wi' wae?
D'ye think my favour's at an end,
Because thy head is turnin' gray?

Although thy strength begins to fail,
Its best was spent in servin' me;
An' can I grudge thy wee bit meal,
Some comfort in thy age to gie?

. . . . . .

O'er past imprudence, oft alane,
I've shed the saut and silent tear;
Then, sharin' a' my grief and pain,
My puir auld friend came snoovin' near.

For a' the days we've sojourned here,
And they've been neither fine nor few,
That thought possesst thee year to year,
That a' my griefs arose frae you.

Wi' waesome face and hingin' head,
Thou wadst hae pressed thee to my knee;
While I thy looks as well could read,
As thou hadst said in words to me:—

'Oh, my dear master, dinna greet;
What hae I ever done to vex thee?
See, here I'm cowrin' at thy feet,
Just take my life, if I perplex thee.

. . . . . .

'Whatever wayward course ye steer;
Whatever sad mischance o'ertake ye;
Man, here is ane will hold ye dear!
Man, here is ane will ne'er forsake ye!'

. . . . . .

When my last bannock's on the hearth,
Of that thou sanna want thy share;
While I hae house or hauld on earth,
My Hector shall hae shelter there.

And should grim death thy noddle save,
Till he has made an end o' me;
Ye'll lie a wee while on the grave
O ane wha aye was kind to thee."

That is true, simple, pathetic. It is exactly what a good-hearted shepherd would say to his dog, if he had the power of putting his feelings in words; and poetry cannot go deeper than the feelings of the heart.

Hogg was not less inspired than Leyden by the scenery of the Border land, and he was, on the whole, very faithful to his impressions; but his special contribution to Border poetry arose from his wondrous sense of the weird and awesome—of the supersensible world of spirit which haunted the older imagination of men in the district—and from a most delicate perception of that ideal of Fairy which, too, had hung on the fancies of men for hundreds of years, but had never been so conceived and so expressed before. Both those feelings had their germ in local legend and tradition; but the sense of the awesome was nursed to maturity in the shepherd

boy as he lay under the shadows of the Blackhouse Heights; and the dream of fairyland was borne in upon him by the beauty of the lonely green nooks of the burns, and the fairy knowes up the glens, and the mysterious silvery sounds that stray of a moonlit night on the sheeny moorlands of Ettrick.

On the genius of Walter Scott,—unquestionably the greatest poet of the Borders—in imaginative literature the unapproached name in Scotland itself,—I can touch in but a limited way. That genius is so full of wealth that it is hardly to be measured. Analysis and criticism readily give place to sympathy and admiration. I propose at present to look at Scott mainly as a poet, who drew his inspiration from the Border land—in fact, from the Tweed, the Yarrow, and the Teviot. The Border country, if not the place of his birth, was the land of his forefathers, with whom he connected himself by a vivid imagination; it was the land of his upbringing and culture, the land of his affections, and his home, and it is now sacred to us as the place of his grave. As far as locality can influence and modify genius, the Border country made Walter Scott. From his childhood his senses and imagination were nourished by the scenery, the ballads, the stories, and legends of the district. It was at Sandyknowe and Smailholm that his genius felt its first dim promptings:—

> "There was poetic impulse given
> By the green hill and clear blue heaven.
> It was a barren scene, and wild,
> Where naked cliffs were rudely piled;

But ever and anon between
Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green;
And well the lonely infant knew
Recesses where the wall-flower grew,
And honeysuckle loved to crawl
Up the low crag and ruined wall."

There his intense feeling for nature had its birth; and there, too, his imaginative love of legend and story and old feudal life was inspired and nourished:—

"And still I thought that shattered tower
The mightiest work of human power;
And marvell'd as the aged hind
With some strange tale bewitched my mind,
Of forayers, who, with headlong force,
Down from that strength had spurred their horse,
Their southern rapine to renew,
Far in the distant Cheviots blue.
And, home returning, fill'd the hall
With revel, wassail-rout, and brawl.
Methought that still with tramp and clang,
The gateway's broken arches rang;
Methought grim features, seam'd with scars,
Glared through the window's rusty bars."

There is a characteristic anecdote of him, relating to this early period of his life at Sandyknowe. It is told of him that in a thunderstorm, as a child, he was found lying on the green sward on his back, watching every flash of lightning, and shouting out, "Bonny! bonny!" There was in this the forecast of his peculiar genius. He found in what to others had seemed simply terrible or awful, the grand and the sublime; a scene of fear passing through the alchemy of his imagination was transformed into a thing of beauty and delight.

Nothing seems to have impressed the young mind

of Scott more deeply—nothing certainly was the source of a finer inspiration—than this old Tower of Smailholm —"situated on the northern boundary of Roxburghshire, among a cluster of wild rocks, called Sandyknowe Crags"—where his grandfather's farmhouse lay, and where he spent a great part of his infancy. The old tower perched on its rocky eminence, surrounded by craggy and grassy knowes, still untouched by the hand of man, and dotted by the unheeding sheep, stands tolerably perfect, as it has done, in spite of Border ravage, since 1535—twenty-two years after Flodden. It is square and massive, of grey whinstone, with door-sides and lintels of a bright almost blood-red sandstone, native to the district. The barmkyn or outward court-yard wall is now nearly all gone, the rock on which the tower stands dips down deep and steep all around, and there is no approach save by what was the western gateway. To the east, almost under the shadow of the tower, is the lochan of *The Abbot*. West and east on the top are bartisans, whence there is a wide-spreading outlook. To the west and north are the Eildons and the dim Lammermoors, to the south and west the Cheviots and Teviotdale, with Ruberslaw, the Dunyon, Peniel Heugh, and Lilliards Edge; and away to the east is the open-spreading cultivated and fertile valley of the Tweed, adorned with wood, and diversified by endless rising eminences scattered over a seemingly boundless plain. Smailholm is the outstanding sentinel of all the lower valley of the Tweed. The old warden from the bartisan could eye the moon rise from the eastern sea over Berwick, and gradually watch the

long reaches of the river as they bared themselves through the far-stretching haughs to its gleam.[1] "This ancient fortress and its vicinity," he tells us, "formed the scene of the Editor's infancy, and seemed to claim from him this attempt to celebrate them in a Border tale." And fortunate for the world it was that they did so; for out of this feeling sprung the ballad of *The Eve of St John*, which was a type and a forecast of the very highest things which Scott did, even in his mature prime. For the spirit of the olden days, for the impression of the feelings and cast of thought of mediæval times, for weird power, Scott has written nothing superior to that grand yet simple rhyme.

The gathering together of the Border ballads in the *Minstrelsy*, in the beginning of the century, was the discipline and preparation for his life-work. It was during his raids into Liddesdale, in quest of song and legend, with his friend Shortreed, that his genius had its bent fixed irrevocably; it was then it acquired the complete spontaneity which afterwards distinguished it. "He was makin' himsel," as Shortreed pithily observed, "and he didna ken o't." Those ballads which he found had been long working in quiet localities on the minds of the people. The romantic muse had visited with fine visions of the past many a peasant home, and cheered and thrilled the breast of many a solitary shepherd on the green hillside. The ballads had been chanted by mothers in shepherds' shielings, which nestled, far away from towns, down by the burn-sides in the solitary glens; chanted chiefly of a winter evening, at the fore-supper

[1] See *The River Tweed*, 15.

time, when the glow of the peat-fire cast flickering shadows on the walls of the quiet room. But these strains were as yet unknown to the world; the muse of the Borders kept court only amid the wild recesses of Liddesdale, the green holms of Yarrow, and the pathetic solitudes of Ettrick. In their native shape, as oral traditions, many of those ballads influenced the sympathetic youth of Leyden and Hogg. But it was reserved for Scott to gather them together, to make them known to the world, to have the spirit of them thoroughly infused into his own being; and, catching up the old refrain, to make it far more glorious than it was before, pouring the fresh spirit of old romance into modern British poetry and fiction. Well might the Mountain Spirit of his native land thus address him:—

> "Decay'd our old traditionary lore,
> Save where the lingering fays renew their ring,
> By milk-maid seen beneath the hawthorn hoar,
> Or round the marge of Minchmore's haunted spring;
> Save where their legends grey-hair'd shepherds sing,
> That now scarce win a listening ear but thine,
> Of feuds obscure, and Border ravaging,
> And rugged deeds recount in rugged line,
> Of moonlit foray made on Teviot, Tweed, or Tyne."

The traditions connected with Thomas the Rhymour, his weird communings with Fairy and Fairyland, and his mysterious fate, seem to have been among the first to fire the fancy of Scott, and we have accordingly in the *Minstrelsy* two new ballads on the prophet of Erceldoune. It was indeed the dim figure of the Rhymour, seen through the mists of five hundred years, which quickened Scott's deepest interest in the romantic poetry of

that early time, and led him to vivify and continue it in the nineteenth century.

There is something very picturesque in the quaint forms of mist that pass up the Border glens and wreathe the wavy hill-tops—something fine and mysterious in their delicate cloudy folds. But let the sun strike even dimly through them, and they become glorious with a new splendour. Scott found the dim floating picturesque legends and songs of the Border land as mists retreating from the glens and hills. The power of his genius penetrated and transfigured them with a sun-like radiancy, and displayed them to the gaze of the world an imperishable object of delight.

These ballads of action—their motion, vividness, intensity of realism — nourished what was strongest in Scott, the historical imagination,—that power by which a man can put himself back into the past, live in it, reproduce it with all the power of real presence ; and further, raise out of this past ideal creations in harmony with it, at once symmetrical, characteristic, and complete. Few men have possessed this power in a degree equal to Scott, and fewer still have possessed it as he did, so as to be able to fuse the real and the ideal with so much truthfulness to the life of the time. And what has the historical imagination of Scott not done for us ? At first locally fired, it soon became national, imperial :—

> " For thou upon a hundred streams,
> By tales of love and sorrow,
> Of faithful love, undaunted truth,
> Hast shed the power of Yarrow."

What interesting portion of Scottish history has this

outspreading power not reanimated? Reanimated, too, in its principal features of historic truth, and yet with enhanced dramatic interest? It has snatched from oblivion a large portion of its domain, brought living forms from the ashes of forgotten graves, made Scotland conscious of the past—conscious, in a word, of herself, in her heritage alike of glory and of shame.

What, it may be asked, did Scott add to these old strains of Border life out of which his poetry grew? The first characteristic difference, as appears to me, between the older minstrel and the modern, particularly Scott, arises from the circumstance of distance in time from the events narrated. The older minstrel, living among the events or near the time of them, treated them as realities; Scott, living in a subsequent age, when they had passed away, was at liberty to treat them as ideals of the memory and imagination. Now the action is remote, and the personal interest of the narrator is subordinate to his artistic interest. The older minstrel had no time or liking for rhetoric—he was too much in earnest; the modern poet can note all the surroundings of scenery, the equipment of knight, in coat of mail, in helm, plume, and lance, a living and moving figure. The latter obviously has not lived in the scene he pictures. It never actually fired his blood. If it makes his pulses throb, it is only the imaginative emotion which springs from that

> "keener rush of blood
> That throbs through bard in bardlike mood."

Hence, too, the modern poet is freer in the creation of plot and incident, more varied in turn of story, less tied down to a single action, than the older minstrel; for the

latter spoke of what had occurred, or of what he believed had occurred, at a definite time, often in his own day, or as a part of a life of which his own day might readily furnish an example. There was a conscientious truthfulness of adherence to the single action or incident, swayed only now and again by a patriotic desire to make the best of the story for his own clan or nationality. Complexity of action or converging lines of narrative were wholly unknown to his art.

Hence, too, we have in Scott the scenery of the incident — whether soft, gentle, and beautiful nature, or grand, terrible, and sublime nature — freely, purely, unconventionally pictured. We have the time of the day—the very hour, be it morn, or noon, or night—distinctively painted. Nothing is wanting to complete the feeling of realism. We have colour, form, aspect of the object, as the actor might have seen them, and as we are permitted leisurely to contemplate them.

Along with the historical imagination, we find Scott characterised by an intense love of free nature — untouched, uncultured nature—the heathery hill and the bracken glen, fair as these have come from the hand of God. In fact, the modern feeling for nature first realised its fullest development in Walter Scott. And the element of description of natural features, which in the older minstrels was a subordinate one, became with Scott a principal part of poetic art. This love was with him a passion—one of the deepest in his heart. He rejoiced in boon nature, that

> "Scattered, free and wild,
> Each plant and flower the mountain child."

"On the wild hill
Let the wild heathbell flourish still;
Cherish the tulip, prune the vine;
But freely let the woodbine twine,
And leave untrimmed the eglantine."

Early in this century Washington Irving came across the Atlantic to see, among other people, the author of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Scott and he walked to the top of the hills above Abbotsford, and Scott pointed out to Irving the statuesque hill-lines of his beloved Border land. Irving, familiar with the vast expanses and the great woods of America, showed little feeling for the scene. Scott indeed thought him dull and disappointed, and was a little hurt through the apparent lack of sympathy. At length, in answer to a remark of Irving's, the poet said to him: "I like the very nakedness of the land; it has something bold, and stern, and solitary about it. When I have been for some time in the rich scenery about Edinburgh, which is like ornamented garden-land, I begin to wish myself back among my own honest grey hills; and if I did not see the heather once a year I think I should die." In these words, spoken with emotion, Scott revealed his soul, the relation of his heart to nature. And the words meant the casting away of the trammels of conventional order and restraint in dealing with outward nature, which had lain as a nightmare on British poetry, ever since it had been subjected to the traditions of the so-called classical and mediæval habit. The true spirit of moor and mountain liberty inspired the utterance; and the same spirit made him bold to paint with truth, purity, and power what lay around him, and what only required the courage of faithful delineation

to raise to universal poetry. This love was wide as it was intense. It embraced nature both in its gentler and in its grander aspects. The feeling for free, pure, gentle nature was quickened and daily nourished in him by the scenery around him—by the green haughs, the soft hill-sides, the sunny gleam, and the picturesque flow of waters in the vales of Tweed and Yarrow. The solitudes of Liddesdale, the wild uplands of Teviot, and dark Loch Skene, helped to nourish the sterner love; and we must add to these the grander scenes of his wanderings in the Highlands of Scotland.

"Stranger! if e'er thine ardent step hath traced
The northern realms of ancient Caledon,
Where the proud Queen of Wilderness hath placed
By Lake and Cataract her lonely throne;
Sublime but sad delight thy soul hath known,
Gazing on pathless glen and mountain high,
Listing where from the cliffs the torrents thrown
Mingle their echoes with the eagle's cry,
And with the sounding lake, and with the moaning sky.

Such are the scenes, where savage grandeur wakes
An awful thrill that softens into sighs;
Such feelings rouse them by dim Rannoch's lakes,
In dark Glencoe such gloomy raptures rise:
Or, farther, where, beneath the northern skies,
Chides wild Loch-Eribol his caverns hoar—
But, be the minstrel judge, they yield the prize
Of desert dignity to that dread shore,
That sees grim Coolin rise, and hears Coriskin roar."

The root-feeling in Scott's relation to outward nature is one of complete realism. He looks upon it as a thing wholly independent of himself and his passing moods of mind—it is, for him, absolutely impersonal. As such, it is an abiding transcendent power—stronger, greater,

more enduring than himself, before which he bows, and whose features, mild and stern, it is his moral and artistic duty faithfully to portray. His feeling for the grander side of nature is a reverential worship—for the gentle side almost a feminine love.

Closely connected with the feeling for free nature in Scott is his wonderful sense of locality, and faculty of imbuing places with the magic power of suggestion. In this he differs mainly from Wordsworth, and resembles Milton. Wordsworth's love of the outward world was enhanced and nourished by the subtle moral and spiritual symbolism which his soul found there; Scott inwove with this love the history of the past, story and legend, until places and natural objects thrill the heart with a wholly new power. Out of the wealth of association stored in his capacious memory, he has instinctively chosen epithet or allusion with singular fitness, and thus raised town or tower, muir, hill, vale, or stream, into an ideal sphere, yet so vividly that it is more real to the imagination than to the senses. Scott has read the language of locality as it was never read before; he has translated the present into the past, so that the past lives in it with more power for us than any experience we can have of it will ever counterbalance. This element is one constantly recurring in his narrative and descriptive passages, and cannot be separated from them in an estimate of their impressiveness.

And we observe the same breaking away from the classical spirit in Scott's relation to place as to natural features. While this spirit, as manifested in English poetry before his time, liked the strong, massive, and

regular, and was entirely deficient in sympathy with ruin and decay, Scott delighted in the broken, the irregular, the ruined. The very stones of a mouldering tower were dear to his heart, for with them were fused the picturesqueness of the present and the spirit of the old; and the green mound or shapeless cairn was his pathetic joy, because it held the buried past.

There is one point worthy of note in this connection, not perhaps at first readily discernible. When the wondrous picturing of localities is presented to us by Scott, we have nearly universally the contrast of rapid movement. Place after place comes up before the eye of the mind in quiet succession, yet never so as to bewilder, and each is pictured as it appears to a rider as he sweeps across country, or perhaps to one in a passing ship as it

> "skirts the strand
> Of mountainous Northumberland."

In this there is a subtle suggestion of the contrast between rest and motion, between the dead history of the past—dead only to the sense, living and quickening in the soul—and the life of the present. William of Deloraine rode from Branksome to Melrose, and the soul of the poet himself was looking from under the barred visor of the moss-trooper. The memories and the awe of the past overshadowed the horseman all through that night ride till dawn. The repose of the places around him, with their silent memories, stirred and quickened the rider on his way:—

> "Soon in his saddle sat he fast,
> And soon the steep descent he passed,

Soon cross'd the sounding barbican,
And soon the Teviot side he wan.
Eastward the wooded path he rode,
Green hazels o'er his basnet nod ;
He passed the Peel of Goldieland,
And cross'd old Borthwick's roaring strand ;
Dimly he viewed the Moat-hill's mound,
Where Druid shades still flitted round ;
In Hawick twinkled many a light ;
Behind him soon they set in night ;
And soon he spurred his courser keen
Beneath the tower of Hazeldean.

. . . . . .

A moment now he slack'd his speed,
A moment breathed his panting steed ;
Drew saddle-girth and corslet band,
And loosen'd in the sheath his brand.
On Minto crags the moonbeams glint,
Where Barnhill hewed his bed of flint ;
Who flung his outlaw'd limbs to rest,
Where falcons hang their giddy nest.

. . . . . .

Unchalleng'd, thence pass'd Deloraine,
To ancient Riddel's fair domain,
Where Aill, from mountains freed,
Down from the lakes did raving come ;
Each wave was crested with tawny foam
Like the mane of a chestnut steed.
In vain ! no torrent, deep or broad,
Might bar the bold moss-trooper's road."

Of Scott's pictorial power as applied directly to the scenes of the Border district, we have the best examples in the Introductions to the Cantos of *Marmion* (1808). He has done nothing truer or finer in the way of description than in the sketches there given. We have a picture of Tweedside in November (Introduction, canto i.), and of the same and of Yarrow in Introductions to canto iv. and canto v. In that to canto ii. we have

a picture of Ettrick Forest as it was; a description of St Mary's Loch in calm, and then in storm from the Wizard's Grave. "Dark Loch Skene" is sketched in the same Introduction. In that to canto iii. we have a picture of Sandyknowe and Smailholm Tower, of his early life there, and the educating influences of the time and scene. A sketch of the Border shepherd's life in winter, and of a snowstorm on the hill, is given in the Introduction to canto iv. In that to canto v. we have a picture of December on the Tweed. These sketches are too familiar to need quotation. But one may be given, which is the most perfect of the whole, the description of St Mary's Loch in calm:—

"Oft in my mind such thoughts awake,
By lone St Mary's silent lake;
Thou know'st it well—nor fen nor sedge
Pollute the pure lake's crystal edge;
Abrupt and sheer, the mountains sink
At once upon the level brink;
And just a trace of silver sand
Marks where the water meets the land.
Far in the mirror, bright and blue
Each hill's huge outline you may view;
Shaggy with heath, but lonely bare,
Nor tree, nor bush, nor brake is there,
Save where, of land, yon slender line
Bears thwart the lake the scatter'd pine.
Yet even this nakedness has power,
And aids the feeling of the hour:
Nor thicket, dell, nor copse you spy
Where living thing concealed might lie;
Nor point, retiring, hides a dell
Where swain, or woodman lone, might dwell;
There's nothing left to fancy's guess,
You see that all is loneliness:
And silence aids—though the steep hills
Send to the lake a thousand rills;

In summer tide, so soft they weep,
The sound but lulls the ear asleep;
Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,
So stilly is the solitude."

This is an exact transcript of the scene; and it is the pure reproduction of the feeling which the scene engenders. It is the eye speaking to the heart. The expression, too, is faultless. There is not a word or phrase in the lines which is inconsistent with simple yet perfect art. I do not think the same can be said of his description of Loch Skene, in which, amid many true lines, there crops up an occasional exaggeration.

The winter scenes are the least good. In these Scott fixes on the harsh features and the inconveniences of the winter day, its chill and its "weary waste of snows":—

"When dark December glooms the day,
And takes our autumn joys away;
When short and scant the sunbeam throws,
Upon the weary waste of snows,
A cold and profitless regard,
Like patron on a needy bard.
. . . . . .
When from our snow-encircled home,
Scarce cares the hardiest step to roam,
Since path is none, save that to bring
The needful water from the spring.
. . . . . .
And answering housewife sore complains
Of carriers' snow-impeded wains." [1]

Scott uses the winter scene simply as a foil to enhance the pleasures of a retreat from the country to city life. In this respect he had not advanced beyond the shiver-

[1] Introduction to canto v. Compare Introduction to canto iv.

ing feeling for winter familiar to Scottish poetry all through the previous centuries. Sensation dominates over sentiment in Scott, as it did in Gawain Douglas in the picture of winter. Scott here manifests a limit to his sympathy, usually very strong, for power and grandeur. He shows no true feeling either for the power of winter storm, the beauty of its snowfall, the pure glory of the white spreading landscape, or the purple gleam on the snow-capped hill—aspects of nature with which he must have been familiar, even in early winter, on Tweedside.

Notwithstanding this limitation to the range of his sympathy, Scott stands out a master of pictorial and descriptive art, as applied to the outward world. His scenes have a unity of character, and they succeed in making a single grand impression. For sense of stillness, about to be broken, what, for example, can be finer than this of Loch Achray?—

> "Where shall he find in foreign land
> So lone a lake, so sweet a strand!
> There is no breeze upon the fern,
> No ripple on the lake,
> Upon her eyry nods the erne,
> The deer has sought the brake;
> The small birds will not sing aloud,
> The springing trout lie still,
> So darkly glooms yon thundercloud
> That swathes as with a purple shroud
> Ben-Ledi's distant hill."

His pictures are, as a consequence or condition of their unity, free from the admixture of incongruous or jarring features; they are thoroughly true to what eye and ear see and hear in the special circumstances; and they are

courageously faithful to the Scottish landscape. The old conventionalism of epithet, borrowed from Continental or English sources, has thoroughly disappeared. The reality of our scenery is given to us as it was never given by Scottish poet before.

Scott's marvellous descriptive power reminds one of that abbey by the Tweed which he loved so well—fair Melrose—not as it now is in its broken picturesqueness as a ruin, but as it was ere a brutal soldiery struck it—when it stood in the beauty of its varied proportions and the consenting symmetry of its parts. It is a fair picture in stone in the haugh of the gleaming river, fair as a whole which eye can conceive or heart yearn towards. Enter it and your admiration is enhanced by the perfection and minuteness of individual ornament, —by the truth, naturalness, and freshness of fern and heath, of leaf and flower, portrayed on the living stone. So it is with each of Scott's grander scenes—his picture of Loch Katrine, of St Mary's Loch in calm, of Edinburgh, of Flodden Field. You feel the power of each as a noble whole, as you would have felt the power of the exterior of that abbey—that poem in stone by the Tweed. Analyse each, enter into it, note the details, as you might do of the tracings on arch and pillar, and you will be not less charmed by the delicate beauty, the weird touch, the lifelike look of minutest feature. And why? Because Scott worked in his art with a spirit as faithful to the nature he saw as did the mediæval artist when, in the devotion of his soul, he concentred the wealth of his imagination and his wondrous reproduction of living forms in the temple of God by

the moving river, and taught us, what we are very slow in learning, that truthfulness in art is itself reverence for the divine, and our means of approach to the consciousness of the thoughts of God embodied in the things around us.

It is a matter of interest for us to inquire how the genius of Scott, in relation to the feeling for nature, acquired its peculiar bent. His historical imagination was clearly stimulated and nourished by the old ballads of action, by legend, and story. But the *Minstrelsy* does not afford quite the same amount of stimulus to the feeling for nature. As we have seen, the references to aspects of the outward world are chiefly indirect, and they are limited in range. But not the less was Scott indebted to local and ancestral conditions for the growth and nourishment of his strong and peculiar feeling for the scenes around him. That certain qualities of character are hereditary, that they may be transmitted from sire to son through a series of generations, and that they may acquire volume and intensity with the descent, will hardly be disputed. Scott's feeling for the aspects of Border scenery may be taken as an instance of a quality of mind transmitted from foregoing times, the residuary result of the experience of his forefathers. His father, indeed, was one of the least romantic and most prosaic of men. As a factor on estates, his pleasure was to pull down old towers and ancient kirks to build farm-steadings and cow-byres. But the circumstances of life may hinder the proper outgoing of latent sensibility, or qualities may overleap a generation. And Scott's mother was of finer mould—a Rutherford and a Borderer. She was

the granddaughter of the Rev. John Rutherford, minister of Yarrow, who had married Christian, granddaughter of the Rev. John Shaw, minister of Selkirk. His ancestors on his father's side had been nothing more or less than a line of Border sheep-farmers, remotely small lairds, attending to sheep when not engaged in reiving. His forebears on both sides had lived a lonely life among the hills for many generations. By their very loneliness and the requirements of their shepherd life, engendering individualism and force of character, they were led to watch the varying aspects of outward nature and to commune with it. Who notes the face of heaven so carefully and with so much interest as the shepherd up in the Border glens? and who knows its varying aspects so well? These men were daily familiar with the look of haugh, hillside, and sky; with the first green shoots of spring, with the heather-bloom on the moors, with the autumn "bent sae brown," with the wild and "waesome" winds of winter. They had noted these varying aspects of nature, and they embodied their experience in expressions at once characteristic, truthful, and full of poetic feeling. These phrases were abstractions, they were handed down traditionally, but daily experience of the feature noted made them living for each successive generation. At early morn they were familiar with what they called *the sky*, or breaking light which heralds the sunrise; the dawn itself they knew in all its forms of radiant glare, and gloomy splendour of light and cloud, when "the red sun is on the rain." They eyed carefully the *weather-gaw*, or broken bit of rainbow above the horizon, which betokened broken weather; and they applied the same

expression to denote a day of an unusually fine character, interposed, as out of season, amid other darker days. When the clouds rose high before the wind and swept across the heavens, they spoke of the *carry* of the clouds and the *rack* of the sky. When the vapour showed thin before the sun and over the face of the *lift*, they recognised the *skaum* or darkening of the sky. Then, again, when the sun struck through the mist that rose from the earth, and made it glorious, they spoke of the *dry ure*. And towards evening, when the westering sun shoots slantingly down the glens, and the broad-browed, deep-bosomed forest hills lie grandly self-shadowed—for objects in general cast their shadows on other objects, the hills on themselves—they knew the *scarrow of the hill*. When the long twilight of an evening came, they rejoiced in that sweetest of poetic times and words, *the gloamin'*—with all its myriad associations of rest, and soothing, and peace—when the face of nature becomes gentle, and the old man of toil has his quiet hour, and in the hearts of the younger people there arise musings, perhaps, of a tender feeling, and dreams of peace in "a biggin' of their ain" at some not remote future. And then, when the gloamin' was nearly over, and the *mirk* was coming rapidly on, they noted the clear yet mysterious belt of light that runs along the flowing lines of the tops of our wavy hills, with the dark cloud of heaven above, and the dark mass of earth below, and this they named *the weather-gleam*—that umbered light in which day and night seem to meet and to be reconciled in one. All these aspects of nature they knew, felt, and noted, and embodied in characteristic phrases. Many of these

men were unconscious, undeveloped poets. Some of them even found utterance for what was in their hearts in plaintive song. How could it be otherwise? They moved in an atmosphere of pure pathos; they felt it in the tremulous shadows which in a summer day mottle the pastoral green; in the sough of the innumerable burns; in the wide solitude of the moorlands, broken only by the pleading voices of the bleating lambs, the plaintive note of the whaup, or the half-wail, half-wile, of the peesweep's cry. Walter Scott, and James Hogg too, both came from a sheep-farming ancestry. Scott laid claim to gentle blood, and prided himself more on this than he needed to do. And I am not sure but that James Hogg had, in point of fact, as good a claim as he, though his immediate ancestors had fallen lower socially than those of Scott. I say *socially*, for no man falls low who does not fall below right-doing. With the circumstances of their forefathers in view, we may take both Scott and Hogg as examples and proof of the physiological and psychological law, not as yet precisely formulated, and subject to many conditions of interference, in virtue of which qualities grow through the accumulated experience of successive generations, until, as with the root in the earth after a long winter, there bursts forth a large complex growth, apparently spontaneous, and beautiful as the crowning and consummate flower of spring. In them the long maturing imaginative faculty that had been silently and unconsciously nourished in their forest ancestors, through summer shine and winter storm, on hillside and by burn, and in lonely glens, bloomed and expanded into the glorious flower of a

genius that loved and sung Scottish nature as it never had been loved or sung before.

Yarrow Unvisited, 1803; *Yarrow Visited*, 1814; *Yarrow Revisited*, 1831,—these are unspeakably precious possessions. The first of them means the power of the ideal over the human heart, the power of the past and the distant gathered into a unity of present impression. The ideal unvisited Yarrow of Wordsworth was one of the truest realities of his life, his life of thought and his life of action. Such was his reverence for the unseen river that he feared to see it, because

> "Unwilling to surrender
> Dreams treasured up from early days,
> The holy and the tender."

He feared lest the actual might dissolve the glorious thrall of the lifelong vision which held him:—

> "Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown,
> It must, or we shall rue it;
> We have a vision of our own,
> Ah! why should we undo it?
>
> The treasured dreams of times long past
> We'll keep them, winsome Marrow;
> For when we're there, although 'tis fair,
> 'Twill be another Yarrow."

We know this feeling well. There is no greater risk in all our experience than that of confronting our ideal with the real, and no more trying experience than feeling the crash of the ideal vision through contact with the unfeeling reality.

But at length the poet saw the stream. Eleven years

afterwards we have *Yarrow Visited.* And we have there the real, the true Yarrow, the truest Yarrow that ever was pictured; real, yet not literal—Yarrow as it is for the spiritual sense, made keen, quick, sensitive, and deep through the brooding over the stories of the years and living communion with the heart of things :—

"And is this—Yarrow? This the stream
Of which my fancy cherish'd
So faithfully a waking dream,
An image that hath perished?

O that some minstrel's harp were near
To utter notes of gladness,
And chase this silence from the air,
That fills my heart with sadness!

Yet why? a silvery current flows
With uncontroll'd meanderings;
Nor have these eyes by greener hills
Been soothed in all my wanderings.

And, through her depths, Saint Mary's lake
Is visibly delighted;
For not a feature of those hills
Is in the mirror slighted.

A blue sky bends o'er Yarrow vale,
Save where that pearly whiteness
Is round the rising sun diffused,
A tender, hazy brightness;

Mild dawn of promise! that excludes
All profitless dejection;
Though not unwilling here to admit
A pensive recollection.

Where was it that the famous flower
Of Yarrow vale lay bleeding?
His bed perchance was yon sweet mound
On which the herd is feeding:

And haply from this crystal pool,
Now peaceful as the morning,
The water-wraith ascended thrice,
And gave his doleful warning.

Delicious is the lay that sings
The haunts of happy lovers,
The path that leads them to the grove,
The leafy grove that covers :

And pity sanctifies the verse
That paints, by strength of sorrow,
The unconquerable strength of love ;
Bear witness, rueful Yarrow !

But thou that didst appear so fair,
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation :

Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
A softness still and holy ;
The grace of forest charms decayed,
And pastoral melancholy.

That region left, the vale unfolds
Rich groves of lofty stature,
With Yarrow winding through the pomp
Of cultivated Nature ;

And, rising from those lofty groves,
Behold a ruin hoary,
The shatter'd front of Newark's Towers,
Renowned in Border story.

Fair scenes for childhood's opening bloom,
For sportive youth to stray in ;
For manhood to enjoy his strength,
And age to wear away in !

Yon cottage seems a bower of bliss,
A covert for protection
Of studious ease and generous cares,
And every chaste affection !

How sweet on this autumnal day
The wild-wood fruits to gather,
And on my true-love's forehead plant
A crest of blooming heather!

And what if I enwreathed my own?
'Twere no offence to reason;
The sober hills thus deck their brows
To meet the wintry season.

I see—but not by sight alone,
Loved Yarrow, have I won thee—
A ray of Fancy still survives—
Her sunshine plays upon thee!

Thy ever-youthful waters keep
A course of lively pleasure;
And gladsome notes my lips can breathe
Accordant to the measure.

The vapours linger round the heights,
They melt, and soon must vanish;
One hour is theirs, nor more is mine—
Sad thought! which I would banish;

But that I know, where'er I go,
Thy genuine image, Yarrow!
Will dwell with me to heighten joy,
And cheer my mind in sorrow."

Eighteen years afterwards the writer of these lines revisited the vale of Yarrow with Walter Scott—immediately before his departure from Abbotsford to Naples, that last hopeless journey—as the trouble came,—

"A trouble not of clouds, or weeping rain,
Nor of the setting sun's pathetic light,
Engendered, hangs o'er Eildon's triple height;
Spirits of Power, assembled there, complain
For kindred Power departing from their sight."

The autumn leaves were fittingly sear on the birches, or they were falling :—

> "But breezes played, and sunshine gleamed—
> The forest to embolden ;
> Reddened the fiery hues, and shot
> Transparence through the golden."

Thoughts of the past naturally arose, mixed with forebodings about the future—"the morn of youth," "life's temperate noon," "her sober eve," "her night not melancholy ;" and, amid it all—

> "Yarrow, through the woods,
> And down the meadows ranging,
> Did meet us with unaltered face,
> Though we were changed and changing."

In 1803, the year of *Yarrow Unvisited*, Wordsworth passed by Neidpath Castle on the Tweed. The surroundings of the ancient and massive keep had then quite recently been the scene of a piece of pitiful havoc, on the part of its worthless owner, seldom matched for evil motive and unsparing destruction. To spite his heir chiefly, the last Douglas of Queensberry of his line ordered the cutting down of the old forest-trees that had grown up through the centuries, and long before he or his two predecessors owned an acre of the property. This was carried out, and the steep sides of the picturesque gorge of the Tweed, through which the river in the far past had worked its way against opposing rock, were left defaced and bare, and the whole demesne "beggar'd and outraged." This fired the heart of the poet, and he has given expression to his feelings in these lines :—

"Degenerate Douglas! O the unworthy lord!
Whom mere despite of heart could so far please
And love of havoc (for with such disease
Fame taxes him) that he could send forth word
To level with the dust a noble horde,
A brotherhood of venerable trees,
Leaving an ancient dome, and towers like these
Beggar'd and outraged! Many hearts deplored
The fate of those old trees; and oft with pain
The traveller at this day will stop and gaze
On wrongs, which Nature scarcely seems to heed:
For shelter'd places, bosoms, nooks, and bays,
And the pure mountains, and the gentle Tweed,
And the green silent pastures, yet remain."

CHAPTER IX.

RECENT POETS.

THERE are still a few names in recent times of men in whom the spirit of Border song issued in utterances which may well be cherished by us. I may mention especially William Laidlaw, Thomas Pringle, James Nicol, Thomas Smibert, Andrew Scott, Allan Cunningham, Henry Scott Riddell, and, but lately taken from us, the youthful preacher and poet, Thomas Davidson.

Lucy's Flittin' is the lyric of the Borders which ranks next to *The Flowers of the Forest.* It was the production of William Laidlaw, the son of the farmer of Blackhouse on the Douglas Burn, the early friend of Hogg, and the lifelong friend and amanuensis of Walter Scott. He was born in 1780, and he died in 1845. *Lucy's Flittin'* could have been written only by one who had been brought up among the south country glens; who knew and felt the simplicity of rural life and manners there, and who, as a man of true lyrical soul, could for the time entirely forget himself, realise the feelings and

speak the language of the breaking-hearted country lassie:—

"'Twas when the wan leaf frae the birk-tree was fa'in',
And Martinmas dowie had wound up the year,
That Lucy row'd up her wee kist wi' her a' in,
And left her auld maister and neebours sae dear;

For Lucy had served in The Glen a' the simmer;
She cam there afore the flower bloomed on the pea,
An orphan was she, and they had been kind till her,
Sure that was the thing brocht the tear to her e'e.

She gaed by the stable where Jamie was stanin';
Richt sair was his kind heart the flittin' to see;
'Fare ye weel, Lucy,' quo' Jamie, and ran in;
The gatherin' tears trickled fast frae his e'e.

As down the burn-side she gaed slow wi' the flittin',
'Fare ye weel, Lucy!' was ilka bird's sang;
She heard the crow sayin't high on the tree sittin',
And robin was chirpin't the brown leaves amang.

Oh, what is't that pits my puir heart in a flutter?
And what gars the tears come sae fast to my e'e?
If I wasna ettled to be ony better,
Then what gars me wish ony better to be?

I'm just like a lammie that loses its mither;
Nae mither or friend the puir lammie can see;
I fear I hae tint my puir heart a' thegither,
Nae wonder the tears fa' sa fast fra my e'e.

Wi' the rest of my claes I hae row'd up the ribbon,
The bonnie blue ribbon that Jamie ga'e me;
Yestreen, when he ga'e me't, and saw I was sabbin',
I'll never forget the wae blink o' his e'e.

Though now he said naething but 'Fare ye weel, Lucy!'
It made me I neither could speak, hear, nor see;
He couldna say mair but just, 'Fare ye weel, Lucy!'
Yet that I will mind till the day that I dee.

[The lamb likes the gowan wi' dew when it's droukit ;
The hare likes the brake and the braird on the lea ;
But Lucy likes Jamie—she turned and she lookit,—
She thocht the dear place she wad never mair see.

Ah, weel may young Jamie gang dowie and cheerless !
And weel may he greet on the bank of the burn !
For bonnie sweet Lucy, sae gentle and peerless,
Lies cauld in her grave, and will never return !"] [1]

This, like Miss Elliot's version of *The Flowers of the Forest*, is a true inspiration of the locality. Its images are drawn from the familiar features of the place, and they express a form of feeling as intense as it is real and natural in the homely life of the persons concerned. Both lyrics may also be said to be the single flowering of the genius of the writers. Laidlaw's other songs, *On the Banks of the Burn*, and *Alake for the Lassie*, are inferior to the one by which he made his name. Simply and naturally as *Lucy's Flittin'* flows, it was, as I have good reason to know, the result of elaborate effort on the part of the writer.

Thomas Pringle was born at Blacklaw, in the parish of Linton, Roxburghshire, in 1789. The Cale or Kale Water, rising in the Cheviots, flows through the parish: its charming hilly and pastoral scenery touched the young poet to fine issues, while its ruined towers and traditional deeds of prowess and raid contributed to nourish the intense patriotism of his heart. Few men have loved Scotland, especially the Border land, with a keener love than Thomas Pringle. He has depicted the scenery of his boyish days in the poem entitled *Autumnal*

[1] These last eight lines are by Hogg.

Excursion, written in 1811.[1] It contains some fine pieces of descriptive poetry. He is out among his father's sheep on the heights :—

"When far remote I loved to lie
And gaze upon the flecker'd sky,
Amid the mountain thyme's perfume,
Where boundless heaths of purple bloom,
Heard but the zephyr's rustling wing,
And wild bee's ceaseless murmuring :
'Twas Nature free, benignant, fair,
That then I watched and worshipped there."

Again :—

"Still, there, where'er my footsteps roam,
My heart untravell'd finds a home :
For 'midst these Border mountains blue,
And vales receding from the view,
And lonely lakes and misty fells,
Some nameless charm for ever dwells ;
Some spirit that again can raise
The Visions of departed days,
And thoughts unuttered, undefined,
That gleam'd across my infant mind !
O lovely was the blest control
Which came like music o'er my soul,
While there, a rude untutor'd boy—
With heart tuned high to nature's joy—
Subdued by beauty's winning form,
Or kindling 'midst the mountain storm,
I dreamt not of the workings deep,
Of wilder passions yet asleep."

Pringle emigrated to South Africa in 1820. There he wrote several poems, chiefly descriptive. Among these is one—*Afar in the Desert*—showing power and intensity of feeling. After some time spent as a settler near the

[1] To be found in *Ephemerides; or, Occasional Poems written in Scotland and South Africa.* By Thomas Pringle. London, 1828.

Kaffir border, he returned home, and died in 1834. A strong spirit of moral indignation at the vile treatment of the natives, under both Dutch and English, runs through his African poems. When leaving the shores of Scotland, and the vales of the Teviot and the Tweed, his heart-feeling found utterance thus :—

"Our native land—our native vale—
A long and last adieu!
Farewell to bonny Teviotdale,
And Cheviot's mountains blue.

Farewell, ye hills of glorious deeds,
And streams renown'd in song—
Farewell ye braes and blossom'd meads,
Our hearts have loved so long.

Farewell, ye blythesome broomy knowes,
Where thyme and harebells grow—
Farewell, ye hoary, haunted howes,
O'erhung with birk and sloe.

The battle-mound, the Border tower,
That Scotland's annals tell—
The martyr's grave, the lover's bower,
To each—to all—farewell!

Home of our hearts! our fathers' home!
Land of the brave and free!
The keel is flashing through the foam
That bears us far from thee!

We seek a wild and distant shore,
Beyond the western main;
We leave thee to return no more,
Nor view thy cliffs again!

But may dishonour blight our fame,
And blast our household fires,
If we, or ours, forget thy name,
Green Island of our sires!

Our native land—our native vale—
A long, a last adieu!
Farewell to bonny Teviotdale,
And Cheviot's mountains blue!"

Pringle caught up the two stanzas which Lady Grisell Baillie left,[1] and thus completed *The Ewe Buchtin's Bonnie*:—

"O the ewe-bughtin's bonnie, baith e'enin' and morn,
When our blythe shepherds play on the bog-reed and horn;
While we're milkin', they're liltin' baith pleasant and clear;
But my heart's like to break when I think on my dear.

O the shepherds take pleasure to blow on the horn,
To raise up their flock o' sheep soon i' the morn;
On the bonnie green banks they feed pleasant and free,
But alas! my dear heart, all my sighin's for thee!

O the sheep-herdin's lightsome amang the green braes,
Where Kale wimples clear 'neath the white-blossomed slaes,
Where the wild-thyme and meadow-queen scent the soft gale,
And the cushat croods luesomely down in the dale.

There the lintwhite and mavis sing sweet frae the thorn,
And blythe lilts the laverock aboon the green corn,
And a' things rejoice in the simmer's glad prime—
But my heart's wi' my love in the far foreign clime!

O the hay-makin's pleasant in bright sunny June—
The hay-time is cheery when hearts are in tune;
But while others are jokin' and laughin' sae free,
There's a pang at my heart and a tear in my e'e.

At e'en i' the gloamin' adown by the burn,
Fu' dowie and wae, oft I daunder and mourn;
Amang the lang broom I sit greetin' alane,
And sigh for my dear and the days that are gane.

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[1] See *supra*, ii. 234.

O the days o' our youth-heid were heartsome and gay,
When we herded thegither by sweet Gaitshaw brae,
When we plaited the rushes and pu'd the witch-bells
By the Kale's ferny houms and on Hownam's green fells.

But young Sandy bood [1] gang to the wars wi' the laird,
To win honour and gowd (gif his life it be spared),
Ah! little care I for wealth, favour or fame,
Gin I had my dear shepherd but safely at hame!

Then round our wee cot though gruff winter should roar,
And poortith glower in like a wolf at the door:
Though our toom purse had barely twa boddles to clink,
And a barley-meal scone were the best on our bink;

Yet he wi' his hirsel, and I wi' my wheel,
Through the howe o' the year we wad fen' unco weel;
Till the lintwhite and laverock and lambs bleatin' fain,
Brought back the blythe time o' ewe-bughtin' again."

The Rev. James Nicol, minister of Traquair, born at Innerleithen, 30th September 1769, died 5th November 1819, is the author of several songs, distinguished some by humour—not over-refined—and others by pathos. *Halucket Meg* belongs to the former class; *Where Quair rins sweet amang the Flowers* to the latter. The song has some fine stanzas. Thus:—

"Where Quair rins sweet amang the flowers,
Down by yon woody glen, lassie,
My cottage stands—it shall be yours,
Gin ye will be my ain, lassie.

I'll watch ye wi' a lover's care,
And wi' a lover's e'e, lassie;
I'll weary heaven wi' mony a prayer,
And ilka prayer for thee, lassie.

[1] Felt bound.

'Tis true I hae na mickle gear ;
My stock is unco sma', lassie ;
Nae fine-spun foreign claes I wear,
Nor servants tend my ca', lassie.

But had I heir'd the British crown,
And thou o' low degree, lassie ;
A rustic lad I wad hae grown,
Or shared that crown wi' thee, lassie.

. . . . . .

I blame the blast blaws on thy cheek ;
The flower that decks thy hair, lassie ;
The gales that steal thy breath sae sweet,
My love and envy share, lassie.

. . . . . .

Where Quair rins sweet amang the flowers,
Down by yon woody glen, lassie,
I have a cot—it shall be yours,
Gin you will be my ain, lassie."

Thomas Smibert was born in Peebles in 1810. He studied medicine, was a surgeon by profession, but betook himself early in life to literature. He lived chiefly in Edinburgh, and he died there in 1854. Some years before his death he published a volume of poems entitled *Io Anche ! Poems chiefly Lyrical*—(1851). Smibert rises to fine and true inspiration wherever he touches his own life-experience and the scenes of his early days. Those who know the circumstances of his early life, when he was assistant to a surgeon in the country, will recognise the allusion in the following verses, and even the road which he was in the habit of travelling of a night, with the dark shadows of the hills on the one side, and on the other the gleam of the Tweed, along his way :—

"I love the sacred, silent hours,
That link the palms of Night and Day,
Wedding the coy reluctant powers
In bands of silver grey.

I love them, though too oft they shake
Oblivion from its proper throne,
And bid the restless soul awake,
And the dear sleep begone.

. . . . . .

Still this grey season hath for me
A charm of deeper feelings born;
With bright peculiar thoughts I see
The rising star of morn.

The draught of bliss that morning sips
Is vast as ocean in its pool;
The cup ordained for mortal lips,
Though small, may be as full.

And of the joys for man designed,
A bounteous store fell then on me;
And, far as suiteth with our kind,
I shared the day-dawn glee.

And why was thus my bosom light?
And wherefore were my spirits gay,
As on I roamed alone by night,
Upon a lonely way?

Love was the power that led me on—
Love was the lamp that lit my path;
Love made long miles seem light as none,
By mount, and moor, and strath.

O! fair was she to whom I gave
The first love of my fervent years—
A love not springing from a grave—
No growth of widowed tears!

O! she was fair! Those dark bright eyes,
The veined marble of that brow,
That cheek of rarely blended dyes—
Methinks I view them now!

Still fondly doth Remembrance hold
By those dear times which saw me rove
By night across the lonesome wold
To taste one hour of Love!

The closing eve beheld me go;
The dawn saluted my return;
But why begin these tears to flow!
Poor heart, why idly mourn?

If she be happy, be thou glad,
Nor vainly what is past deplore;
And yet, how may I be but sad,
Since I can love no more!

O! rightly have the poets sung,
That when Love's vernal bloom hath flown,
No more, where once it freshly sprung,
Can the fair flower be known!

. . . . . .

It is not that my hair is grey,
Nor that my blood is thin and cold;
Few seasons, since young Passion's day,
Above my head have rolled.

. . . . . .

The cup was full, brimful of bliss,
Which it was mine erewhile to drain;
I loved—was loved; the end is this—
I cannot love again!"

But the best poem which Smibert has written is a lyric entitled *The Scottish Widow's Lament.* It is one of the truest and most pathetic pictures of that simple life of joy and sorrow with which we may meet any day in the Tweedside glens. How sweetly does quiet domestic happiness nestle in those shepherd cottages that are hidden in the recesses of the hills far up among the burns! And how peculiarly heavy and sharp is the stroke of sudden bereavement when there, away from

human haunts, it falls on the wife and mother, and leaves her a solitary widow in the solitary glen! This touching theme is the subject of the following lyric, and it is as true and deep in feeling as it is fine in local allusion:—

"Afore the Lammas tide
Had dun'd the birken-tree,
In a' our water-side
Nae wife was blest like me;
A kind gudeman, and twa
Sweet bairns were round me here,
But they're a' ta'en awa'
Sin' the fa' o' the year.

Sair trouble cam our gate,
And made me, when it cam,
A bird without a mate,
A ewe without a lamb.
Our hay was yet to maw,
And our corn was to shear,
When they a' dwined awa'
In the fa' o' the year.

I downa look a-field,
For aye I trow I see
The form that was a bield
To my wee bairns and me;
But wind, and weet, and snaw,
They never mair can fear,
Sin' they a' got the ca'
In the fa' o' the year.

Aft on the hill at e'ens
I see him mang the ferns,
The lover o' my teens,
The father o' my bairns:
For there his plaid I saw
As gloamin' aye drew near—
But my a's now awa'
Sin' the fa' o' the year.

Our bonnie rigs theirsel',
Reca' my waes to mind,
Our puir dumb beasties tell
O' a' that I have tined ;
For wha our wheat will saw,
And wha our sheep will shear,
Sin' my a' gaed awa'
In the fa' o' the year ?

My hearth is growing cauld,
And will be caulder still ;
And sair, sair in the fauld
Will be the winter's chill ;
For peats were yet to ca',
Our sheep they were to smear,
When my a' passed awa'
In the fa' o' the year.

I ettle whiles to spin,
But wee, wee patterin' feet
Come rinnin' out and in,
And then I just maun greet :
I ken it's fancy a',
And faster rows the tear,
That my a' dwined awa'
In the fa' o' the year.

Be kind, O Heaven abune !
To ane sae wae and lane,
An' tak' her hamewards sune,
In pity o' her maen ;
Lang ere the March winds blaw,
May she, far far frae here,
Meet them a' that's awa'
Sin' the fa' o' the year."

Andrew Scott was born at Bowden, close to the Eildons, as far back as 1757. He died in 1839 at the age of eighty-two, and is buried in Bowden churchyard. He was of peasant extraction, and served as a

soldier in the American war, after which he returned to spend the remainder of his days in his native district. His poetic inspiration was due mainly to the reading of Allan Ramsay. His verses have a genuine flavour of the moorland, and they are simple as the rural life he portrays. Any time during the last fifty years we might have found on the Border uplands the prototype of the small farmer depicted in *Rural Content*. The class is not so numerous nowadays, but fortunately we have still a few who exemplify the integrity and the homely virtues of the race:—

"I'm now a gude farmer, I've acres o' land,
An' my heart aye loups licht when I'm viewin' o't,
An' I hae servants at my command,
An' twa daintie cowts for the plowin' o't.

My farm is a snug ane, lies high on a muir,
The muir-cocks and plivers aft skirl at my door,
An' when the sky lowers, I'm sure o' a show'r,
To moisten my land for the plowin' o't.

Leeze me on the mailin that's fa'n to my share,
It takes sax muckle bowes for the sawin' o't:
I've sax braid acres for pasture, an' mair,
An' a dainty bit bog for the mawin' o't.

A spence and a kitchen my mansion-house gies,
I've a cantie wee wifie to daut whan I please;
Twa bairnies, twa callans, that skelp ower the leas,
An' they'll soon can assist at the plowin' o't.

My biggin' stands sweet on this south-slopin' hill,
An' the sun shines sae bonnily beamin' on't;
An' past my door trots a clear prattlin' rill
Frae the loch, where the wild ducks are swimmin' on't.

An' on its green banks, on the gay simmer days,
My wifie trips barefit, a bleachin' her claes,
An' on the dear creature wi' rapture I gaze,
While I whistle and sing at the plowin' o't.

To rank among farmers I hae muckle pride,
But I maunna speak high when I'm tellin' o't,
How brawly I strut on my shelty to ride,
Wi' a sample to show for the sellin' o't.

In blue worset boots that my auld mither span
I've aft been fu' vantie sin' I was a man,
But now they're flung by, and I've bought cordovan,
And my wifie ne'er grudged me a shillin' o't.

. . . . . .

Now hairst-time is o'er, an' a fig for the laird,
My rent's now secure for the toilin' o't;
My fields are a' bare, and my crap's in th' yard,
And I'm nae mair in doubts o' the spoilin' o't.

Now welcome gude weather, or wind, or come weet,
Or bauld ragin' winter, wi' hail, snaw, or sleet,
Nae mair can he draigle my crap 'mang his feet,
Nor wraik his mischief, and be spoilin' o't.

An' on the douf days, when loud hurricanes blaw,
Fu' snug i' the spence I'll be viewin' o't,
And jink the rude blast in my rush-theikit ha',
When fields are sealed up frae the plowin' o't.

My bonnie wee wifie, the bairnies, and me,
The peat-stack and turf-stack our Phœbus shall be,
Till day close the scoul o' its angry e'e,
And we'll rest in good hopes o' the plowin' o't.

SEQUEL TO THE FOREGOING.

An' when the year smiles, and the laverocks sing,
My man Jock and me shall be doin' o't;
He'll thrash, and I'll toil on the fields in the spring,
An' turn up the soil at the plowin' o't.

An' whan the wee flowerets begin there to blaw,
The laverock, the peasweep, and skirlin' pick-maw,
Shall hiss the bleak winter to Lapland awa',
Then we'll ply the blythe hours at the sawin' o't.

An' when the birds sing on the sweet simmer morn,
My new crap I'll keek at the growin' o't;
When hares niffer love 'mang the green brairdit corn,
An' dew-drops the tender blade showin' o't.

On my brick o' fallow my labours I'll ply,
An' view on their pasture my twa bonny kye,
Till hairst-time again circle round us wi' joy,
Wi' the fruits o' the sawin' and plowin' o't."[1]

Allan Cunningham, born in 1785 at Blackwood in Dumfriesshire, died in London, 1842, has given us, in his *Songs of Scotland* (1825), several lyrics due to Border inspiration. Our only regret is that he did not accurately distinguish the outflowings of his own wealth of genius from the older fragments of poetry which he found, and which he incorporated or transfused with his own. In the following instance we have a song of his own composition, founded certainly on stanzas and incidents previously known, the subject being the fate of a brother minstrel of the olden time, no less a personage than "Rattlin' Willie." In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*,[2] the old harper makes allusion to him as a minstrel still older than himself. Cunningham says of him that "he was a noted ballad-maker and brawler, and his sword-hand was dreaded as much as his bow-hand was admired."[3] He killed a brother minstrel, Robin of Rule Water, in a quarrel about

[1] From *Poems chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, by Andrew Scott, Camiestoun, near Bowden, 179 (1821). See also *The Book of Scottish Songs*, Part x. 626. J. R., Edinburgh. A most interesting and well-edited collection of Scottish poetry.

[2] Canto iv., xxxiv. xxxv.

[3] Allan Cunningham's *Songs of Scotland*, ii. 337.

the merits of their playing. The reference in the *Lay* is as follows :—

"He knew each ordinance and clause
Of Black Lord Archibald's battle laws,
In the old Douglas' day.
He brook'd not, he, that scoffing tongue
Should tax his minstrelsy with wrong,
Or call his song untrue :
For this, when they the goblet plied,
And such rude taunt had chafed his pride,
The bard of Reull he slew.
On Teviot's side, in fight they stood,
And tuneful hands were stained with blood ;
Where still the thorn's white branches wave,
Memorial o'er his rival's grave.

Why should I tell the rigid doom,
That dragg'd my master to his tomb ;
How Ousenam's maidens tore their hair,
Wept till their eyes were dead and dim,
And wrung their hands for love of him,
Who died at Jedwood Air ?"

Scott quoted, in the third edition of the *Lay* in 1806, certain stanzas of an old ballad referring to "Rattlin' Willie." He was evidently a minstrel of the sprightly order, and a great favourite in the district. From other fragmentary stanzas Willie was obviously also the hero of some love exploit, common enough in the times. He had the misfortune to fall out with a contemporary bard about the merits of their songs or playing. The quarrel grew hot, and the two, Willie and Robin, retired and fought it out in a duel. Robin, his adversary, was killed. In ordinary circumstances in those times this was the usual way of settling a quarrel, and counted for little or nothing.

But unfortunately for Willie, Robin, the man he slew, had powerful partisans in certain Elliots, especially those of Stobs and Falnash; and they were determined on vengeance for this Robin of Rule Water. Willie, a poor man, without friends or a clan, went in hiding, but unluckily gave a clue to his whereabouts by appearing at Jedburgh on the day of the Rude or Cross Fair. Stobs and Falnash pursued him, and caught him on the Ousenam Water, got him taken to Jedburgh and executed. All this does not appear in Scott, or in the Maidment version of the ballad. But it seems to be the truth. Allan Cunningham, knowing Scott's stanzas, and the tradition as well, made the incident the subject of a ballad.

The merit of identifying "Rattlin' Roarin' Willie" with a historical personage is due to the late Sir Walter Elliot of Wolflee. In a paper contributed by him to the *Transactions* of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club in 1886, he showed that the Willie of tradition and the ballad was William Henderson of Priesthaugh, near Skelfhill in Teviotdale, and that the combat in which Willie slew his compeer piper took place in 1627.

Allan Cunningham's ballad, an exceedingly fine one, is as follows:—

"Our Willie's away to Jeddart,
To dance on the rood-day,
A sharp sword by his side,
A fiddle to cheer the way.
The joyous tharms o' his fiddle
Rob Rool had handled rude,
And Willie left New Mill banks
Red-wat wi' Robin's blude.

Our Willie's away to Jeddart—
  May ne'er the saints forbode
That ever sae merry a fellow
  Should gang sae black a road!
For Stobs and young Falnash,
  They followed him up and down—
In the links of Ousenam Water
  They found him sleeping soun'.

Now may the name of Elliot
  Be cursed frae firth to firth!
He has fettered the gude right hand
  That keepit the land in mirth;
That keepit the land in mirth,
  And charm'd maids' hearts frae dool;
And sair will they want him, Willie,
  When birks are bare at Yule.

The lasses of Ousenam Water
  Are rugging and riving their hair,
And a' for the sake of Willie—
  They'll hear his sangs nae mair.
Nae mair to his merrie fiddle
  Dance Teviot's maidens free:
My curses on their cunning,
  Wha gaured sweet Willie dee."

The *Rattlin' Roarin' Willie* which Burns sent to Johnson's *Musical Museum*, with an added stanza, apparently refers to the same personage, but it has in it nothing of the traditional or historic, an element with which the Ayrshire bard had very little sympathy. There is also in Herd's *Collection*[1] a love-song entitled *Ranting Roaring Willie.*

Henry Scott Riddell is the author of several well-known lyrics of a pastoral and strongly patriotic cast.

[1] I. 285.

He was born in 1798 at Sorbie in Dumfriesshire, the son of a shepherd, and himself a shepherd in his earlier years. He studied for the Church of Scotland, and was licensed as a preacher. The latter part of his life was spent at Teviothead, where he died in 1870. His songs breathe the inspiration of Lowland Scotland; and his *Dowie Dens of Yarrow* has caught a good deal of the older spirit of the place. The lyric is, on the whole, a fine one:—

"Oh, sisters, there are midnight dreams
That pass not with the morning,
Then ask not why my reason swims
In a brain so wildly burning.
And ask not why I fancy how
Yon wee bird sings wi' sorrow,
That bluid lies mingled with the dew,
In the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

My dream's wild light was not of night,
Nor of the dolefu' morning;
Thrice on the stream was seen the gleam
That seem'd his sprite returning:
For sword-girt men came down the glen
An hour before the morrow,
And pierced the heart aye true to mine,
In the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

Oh, there are red red drops of dew
Upon the wild flower's blossom,
But they couldna cool my burning brow,
And shall not stain my bosom.
But from the clouds o' yon dark sky
A cold cold shroud I'll borrow,
And long and deep shall be my sleep
In the dowie dens o' Yarrow.

Let my form the bluid-dyed floweret press
By the heart o' him that lo'ed me,
And I'll steal frae his lips a long long kiss
In the bower where aft he wooed me.

For my arms shall fold and my tresses shield
The form of my death-cold marrow,
When the breeze shall bring the raven's wing
O'er the dowie dens o' Yarrow."

The same influences of song and scenery worked in the breast of one who was taken away from us too early for the maturing of his powers—I mean Thomas Davidson, preacher and poet, born 1838, died 1870. At the close of the summer of 1862, Davidson visited the Cheviots, where he had spent a portion of his early youth, and thus he wrote of them:—

"Once more, once more upon the hills!
No more the splendour quivering bright,
Which finger laid at summer height
Upon the lips of half the rills,
Pours on them, but the year's most mellow light.
Far through yon opening of the vale,
Upon the slopes of Teviotdale,
The green has ta'en a fainter tinge;
It is the time when flowers grow old,
And summer trims her mantle fringe
With stray threads of autumnal gold.

The west wind blows from Liddesdale;
And as I sit—between the springs
Of Bowmont and of Cayle—
To my half-listening ear it brings
All floating voices of the hill—
The hum of bees in heather-bells,
And bleatings from the distant fells,
The curlew's whistle far and shrill,
And babblings of the restless rill
That hastes to leave its lone hillside,
And hurries on to sleep in Till,
Or join the tremulous flow of Teviot's sunny tide.

. . . . . .

Oh, western wind, so soft and low,
Long-lingering by furze and fern,
Rise! From thy wing the languor throw,
And by the marge of mountain tarn,
By rushy brook, and lonely cairn,
Thy thousand bugles take, and blow
A wilder music up the fells!
Thy whispered spells—
About my heart I feel them twined;
And all the landscape far around
'Neath their still strength lies thrall'd and bound;
The sluggard clouds, the loitering streams,
And all the hills are dreaming dreams,
And I, too, dream with them, O western wind!

This morn I thought to linger here
Till fall of evening and the dew—
To think some fresher thought perchance, or rear
Old hopes in forms and colours new;
Then homeward by the burn-side wend,
When over Cheviot, keen and clear,
The moon look'd down upon the land.
But sad sweet spots hath each lost year—
As ruins have their crevice-flowers
That sprinkle beauty o'er decay;
And I've been sitting hours on hours,
While those old seasons hovering near
Beguiled me of to-day!

I said that they were faded out,
The lines that years in me have wrought.
Alas! there is no hand to smooth
Life's graven record from our brows;
Fate drives us from the fields of youth,
And no returning step allows.
Let me no more, then, with reverted eyes—
Let me no more with covetous sighs,
Gaze at the light which on them lies.
But come, assail me without ruth,
Pains of the life that's still my own!
Crowd out of sight the time that's gone,
Come, living cares; and come, the hour's anxieties!" [1]

[1] See *The Life of a Scottish Probationer*, by James Brown, 77.

His touching lines, *And there will I be buried*, speak the inner feeling of his heart, and show how deeply he was moved by the scenery of his youth :—

"Tell me not the good and wise
Care not where their dust reposes—
That to him in death who lies
Rocky beds are even as roses.

I've been happy above ground ;
I can never be happy under
Out of gentle Teviot's sound—
Part us not, then, far asunder.

Lay me here where I may see
Teviot round his meadows flowing,
And around and over me
Winds and clouds for ever going." [1]

The far-borne notes of Border song, like wandering echoes from the past, and the aspects of Border scenery, still touch the ear and the heart of men in our own time with a genuine inspiration. Thomas Tod Stoddart has shown how the enthusiasm of the angler can be fitly interwoven with the ardour of the poetic lover of Border hillside, stream, and glen. In his *Musings on the Banks of Teviot* there are some good stanzas :—

"With thy windings, gentle Teviot!
Through life's summer I have travell'd—
Shared in all thy merry gambols,
All thy mazy course unravell'd.

Every pool I know and shallow,
Every circumstance of channel,
Every incident historic
Blent with old or modern annal,

[1] See *The Life of a Scottish Probationer*, by James Brown, 264.

Which, within thy famous valley,
Dealt a mercy or a sorrow—
Every song and every legend
Which has passed into its morrow.

. . . . . .

Still with glowing virtues, Teviot!
Graces, joys, and forms of beauty,
Fill the valley of thy holding—
Roll in dignity of duty!

Forward roll and link thy fortunes
With fair Tweed—thine elder sister!
Lyne and Leithen, Ettrick, Leader,
In their earlier turns have kissed her.

Welcome, more than all the others,
Thou, whose fulness of perfection
Finds a grateful recognition
In this symbol of affection!

So entwined, Tweed glides exultant
As a joyful burden bearing
All thy passionate confidings—
The rich lore of love and daring,

Which to ballad and romances
Oft uncouthly bard committed,
Guided by thy chime or plaining,
To the rhythm which best befitted."

Mr Stoddart has given us a spirited lyric entitled *Tweed and its Prospects*:—

"River of all rivers dearest
To the Scottish heart—to ours!
River without shade of rival,
Rolling crystals, nursing flowers.

Stirring up the soul of music,
Chanting, warbling, beating, chiming,
To the poet's ardent fancy,
Adept in the art of rhyming;

Marching onward through thy valley
With the bearing of a king,
From the hundred hills surrounding
All thy vassals summoning!

Of our Rivers still the glory!
God defend it! there is need,
For the demon of pollution
Campeth on the banks of Tweed.

. . . . . .

Where were fought the fights of freedom,
And the stirring songs were sung,
Which the heart and arm of Scotland
Moved as with a trumpet tongue.

Count the forces of the upstart,
Smoke-begrimed and dimly seen,
On and under the horizon,
Blackening the blue and green.

Idle task! they multiply
Faster than the pen can score,
Legion crowding upon legion,
Like the waves that scourge the shore.

Read the motto on their banner:
Self and Pelf! so apt the scroll;
Nor an apter on the headstone,
Nor on knightly bannerol.

Pelf and Self! the double demon!
From its clutch, good God, deliver!
Save from taint of the defiler,
Saviour! save our dearest River!

For the life-blood of our valleys
We entreat on bended knee!
For the Queen of nursing mothers,
God! defend her chastity!" [1]

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[1] *Songs of the Seasons, and other Poems.* By Thomas Tod Stoddart. 1873.

There are one or two stanzas in this which might fairly enough be modified. The manufacturers are probably not more bent on pelf and self than other classes of the community. Yet *Tweed and its Prospects* indicates a dire foreboding; while nothing since it was written tends to show that the forecast on the whole was too gloomy. Surely we may yet find some means of reconciling industrial development, on the banks of the Tweed and its tributaries, with public health and comfort, and with natural beauty. Light, air, and water are among the elementary needs of man. God has provided them bountifully enough. It is surely the part of public legislation to preserve these intact against any private interest, however pressing and powerful.

Mr Stoddart has left us some excellent fishing songs.[1] Among these is the following:—

"Let ither anglers choose their ain,
An' ither waters tak' the lead,
O' Hielan' streams we covet nane,
But gi'e to us the bonnie Tweed!
An' gi'e to us the cheerfu' burn
That steals into its valley fair—
The streamlets that at ilka turn
Sae saftly meet an' mingle there.

The lanesome Tala and the Lyne,
An' Manor wi' its mountain-rills,
An' Etterick whose waters twine;
Wi' Yarrow frae the Forest hills;
An' Gala too, and Teviot bright,
An' mony a stream o' playfu' speed;
Their kindred valleys a' unite
Amang the braes o' bonnie Tweed.
. . . . . .

[1] See *An Angler's Rambles and Angling Songs*. 1866.

Frae Holylee to Clovenford,
A chancier bit ye canna ha'e ;
Sae gin ye tak' an angler's word,
Ye'll through the whuns an' ower the brae,
An' work awa wi' cunnin' hand
Yer birzy heckles, black and reid ;
The saft sough o' a slender wand
Is meetest music for the Tweed ! "

The volume of *Ballads and Lyrics of Old France, with other Poems,* by A. Lang (1872), contains elegant translations of some very beautiful pieces of the older poets of France. Mr Lang has, besides, given us some poems of his own, and among these are two lyrics at once sweet and true, entitled *Twilight on Tweed,* and *Sunset on Yarrow.* I give the former :—

" Three crests against the saffron sky,
Beyond the purple plain,
The dear remembered melody
Of Tweed once more again.

Wan water from the Border hills,
Dear Voice from the old years,
Thy distant music lulls and stills,
And moves to quiet tears.

Like a loved ghost thy fabled flood
Fleets through the dusky land ;
Where Scott, come home to die, has stood,
My feet returning stand.

A mist of memory broods and floats,
The Border waters flow ;
The air is full of ballad notes,
Borne out of long ago.

Old songs that sung themselves to me,
Sweet through a boy's day-dream,
While trout below the blossom'd tree
Plashed in the golden stream.

Twilight, and Tweed, and Eildon Hill,
Fair and thrice fair you be;
You tell me that the voice is still
That should have welcomed me."

In 1869 appeared a volume of poems by "J. B. Selkirk." "J. B." is a Borderer by birth and upbringing; and though in his volume there is not much local allusion, we can detect the breath of the forest hills in *Retreat*, and the power of the forest legends in *The Yerle's Vow*. But I am happy to be able to give *A Song of Yarrow* by this author, which shows how deeply and purely that stream of song can even now, in this materialistic age, touch the heart of one of its sons, who is not less distinguished by practical ability in industrial pursuits than by a tender imaginative susceptibility:—

A Song of Yarrow.

"September, and the sun was low,
The tender greens were flecked with yellow,
And autumn's ardent after-glow,
Made Yarrow's uplands rich and mellow.

Between me and the sunken sun,
Where gloaming gathered in the meadows,
Contented cattle, red and dun,
Were slowly browsing in the shadows.

And out beyond them, Newark reared
Its quiet tower against the sky,
As if its walls had never heard
Of wassail-rout or battle-cry.

O'er moss-grown roofs that once had rung
To reivers' riot, Border brawl,
The slumberous shadows mutely hung,
And silence deepened over all.

Above the high horizon bar
A cloud of golden mist was lying,
And over it a single star
Soared heavenward, as the day was dying.

No sound, no word, from field or ford,
Nor breath of wind to float a feather,
While Yarrow's murmuring waters poured
A lonely music through the heather.

In silent fascination bound,
As if some mighty spell obeying,
The hills seemed listening to the sound,
And wondering what the stream was saying.

What secret to the inner ear,
What happier message was it bringing,
What more of hope and less of fear,
Than man dare mix with earthly singing?

Earth's song it was, yet heavenly growth—
It was not joy, it was not sorrow,—
A strange heart-fulness of them both
The wandering singer seemed to borrow.

Like one that sings and does not know,
But in a dream hears voices calling,
Of those that died long years ago,
And sings although the tears be falling.

Oh Yarrow! garlanded with rhyme!
That clothes thee in a mournful glory,
Though sunsets of an elder time
Had never crowned thee with a story,

Still would I wander by thy stream,
Still listen to the lonely singing,
That gives me back the golden dream
Through which old echoes yet are ringing.

Love's sunshine! sorrow's bitter blast!
Dear Yarrow, we have seen together;
For years have come and years have past,
Since first we met among the heather.

Ah! those indeed were happy hours,
When first I knew thee, gentle river;
But now thy bonny birken bowers
To me, alas! are changed for ever.

The best, the dearest, all have gone,
Gone like the bloom upon the heather,
And left us singing here alone
Beside life's cold and winter weather.

I, too, pass on, but when I'm dead,
Thou still shalt sing by night and morrow,
And help the aching heart and head
To bear the burden of its sorrow.

And summer flowers shall linger yet,
Where all thy mossy margins guide thee;
And minstrels, met as we have met,
Shall sit and sing their songs beside thee."[1]

The old note of that

"pleasing song
Of him who sad beneath the wither'd branch
Sat of Traquair, complaining of his lass,"[2]

has quickened the creative feeling of one who could render in musical verse both Highland grandeur and Lowland pathos. It is thus Principal Shairp sings of *The Bush aboon Traquair,* as freshly as it were for the first time:—

"Will ye gang wi' me and fare
To the bush aboon Traquair?
Ower the high Minchmuir we'll up and awa',
This bonny summer noon,
While the sun shines fair aboon,
And the licht sklents gently doon on holm and ha'.

[1] This has been since published by the author, along with other interesting poems.

[2] Hamilton of Bangour.

And what would ye do there,
At the bush aboon Traquair?
A lang dreich road, ye had better let it be;
Save some auld skrunts o' birk
I' the hillside lirk
There's nocht i' the warld for man to see.

But the blythe lilt o' that air,
'The Bush aboon Traquair,'
I need nae mair, it's eneuch for me;
Ower my cradle its sweet chime
Cam' soughin' frae auld time,
Sae tide what may, I'll awa' and see.

And what saw ye there
At the bush aboon Traquair?
Or what did you hear that was worth your heed?
I heard the cushies croon
Through the gowden afternoon,
And the Quair burn singing doon to the Vale o' the Tweed.

And birks, saw I three or four,
Wi' grey moss bearded ower,
The last that are left o' the birken shaw,
Whar mony a simmer een
Fond lovers did convene,
Thae bonny bonny gloamins that are lang awa'.

Frae mony a but and ben,
By muirland, holm, and glen,
They cam yin hour to spen' on the greenwood sward;
But lang hae lad and lass
Been lying 'neath the grass,
The green green grass o' Traquair kirkyard.

They were blest beyond compare,
When they held their trysting there,
Amang thae greenest hills shone on by the sun;
And then they wan a rest,
The lownest and the best,
I' Traquair kirkyard when a' was dune.

Now the birks to dust may rot,
Names o' luvers be forgot,

Nae lads and lasses there ony mair convene ;
But the blithe lilt o' yon air,
Keeps the bush aboon Traquair,
And the luve that ance was there, aye fresh and green."

In the year 1867 Principal (then Professor) Shairp resided for some months in the valley of Manor. While there he wrote the following lines on Manor Water, then known to him for almost the first time, for I do not think he had come across it in his earlier Border wanderings. It was while living with me for a week at The Loaning, in the early part of the summer of this year, that he for the first time went with me into Manor. I well remember the emotion of surprise and admiration which he manifested, and the expression of the words, "We shall have a house here this summer"; and a house accordingly was found in the modern farm-dwelling of Castlehill, beneath the shadow of its mouldering tower, within hearing of the Manor, and immediately in sight of the Screes—now grey, now deep purple after rain—that rise with a weird charm from the haugh on the opposite side of the stream.

Manor Water.

1.

"Doth Yarrow flow endeared by dream
And chaunt of Bard and Poet ?
As fair to sight flows Manor's stream,
And only shepherds know it :—

2.

In autumn-time when thistle-down
Upon the breeze is sailing,
And from high clouds the shadows brown
Go o'er the mountains trailing.

3.

The streams of Yarrow do not range
By greener holm or meadow,
Nor win a sweeter interchange
Of sunshine and of shadow.

4.

And when along these heights serene,
Go days of autumn weather,
How splendid then the grassy sheen
With bracken blent and heather!

5.

When from yon hill across the glen
The Harvest moon doth wander,
She lingers o'er no strath or ben,
With sweeter looks and fonder.

6.

Then what hath Yarrow, that famed stream
By hundred poets chanted,
To win the glory and the dream,
This dale hath wholly wanted?

7.

It is not beauty, nor rich store
Of braver deeds and older:
Down all this water Peel towers hoar
Of stern old warriors moulder.

8.

O'er these hills rode beneath the moon,
With his bride, Lord William flying;
At this wan water they lighted down,
The stream his life-blood dyeing.

9.

Whence then did Yarrow win her claim
To such poetic favour?
She kept the old melodious name,
The old Celtic people gave her.

10.

And when upon her banks befell
Some love-pain, or deep sorrow,
Some Bard was nigh to sing it well
To the magic chime of Yarrow."

Eleven years after this, in 1878, my friends Mr Lushington and Mr Shairp were for a few days with me at The Loaning. On a fine sunny and crisp September morning we drove down the Tweed, and up by the hill-pass of Newhall to the Yarrow. We went by Cardrona and old charming Traquair, with its haunting memories of Scottish and Border story. Going up, of course, by the Newhall Burn, we ascended the Pad o' Slack (vulgarly Paddie Slacks), and passed by Glenlude on the right,—the most charming and appropriate of all the approaches to Yarrow. There was a soft silence in the air as of a surrounding sympathy; a quiet brown of ferns on the hillsides and in the hopes, a fading greenery of those greenest of braes, and a lingering passing of the ruddy grace on the heather. And here and there a grouse-cock by the side of the hill-road rose, flapped, and crowed—for then the wild birds there had a natural freedom, ere there was the letting of the shooting, the driving, and thus the desolation of death which one now finds. The Newhall Burn, most of the way upwards, made a quiet music for us, as only a Border burn in a still dreamy autumn day, when it meets a loving ear, can do. We got to the Mount Benger ridge, and there paused for a little, that we might take in the place of outlook whence Wordsworth, with Hogg and Laidlaw, first saw the Yarrow. The Gordon Arms — that spot of old

memories and ever-living charms to me — was soon reached; and we eyed curiously the prospect by Altrive, up Eldinhope to the head of the Tuschielaw Burn, and the hills of Ettrick. But these were not to be touched this day. They only served to impress us with the wealth of the suggestions of the land around us. Up the Yarrow we went — that calm, soothing, delightful stretch between the Gordon Arms and Kirkstead—the heart of the solitude of the enchanted stream.

A little above Kirkstead, where the Loch opens fully to the view, we left the carriage, sending it on to Tibbie's. Everybody knows where that is, who knows anything of the Border land. We then took the ascent of the hill to the right, passed "The Cross," on one of the most fitting spots where cross could have stood, with outlook of hill, gleam of water, and circle of sky,—sufficient of themselves to make a man feel the power of holiness and self-sacrifice. Then we touched Binram's grave,—

> "The Wizard-Priest, whose bones are thrust
> From company of holy dust."

Within the ancient graveyard of St Mary's of the Lowes are the simple tombstones and mounds of many of the old shepherd and farmer names of the Border—Brydon, Laidlaw, Scott, and Grieve—

> "The peasant rests him from his toil,
> And, dying, bids his bones be laid,
> Where erst his simple fathers prayed."

Here is the tomb of that Edinburgh John Grieve, who was generous and held out a helping hand to James Hogg in his early struggles, and who, when *Kilmeny*

appeared, meeting the Shepherd on the street, seized his hand, and said exultingly, "Man, Jamie, I never thocht ye could have written that!"

Then we made for Meggat and Henderland—that charming valley that opens the vision to the grand summits of Cramalt and Meggat Head. We saw Piers Cockburn's tomb, the ruined mounds of the chapel around it; and on the other side of the burn the green knowes that mark the site of the tower whence the Cockburns ruled the lands around, long ere Scott or other modern names had more than a yeoman footing in the district. Both Shairp and Lushington stood by the burn that divides the featureless ruins of castle and chapel, deeply moved. I saw it in their faces. The place and its story were working in their hearts. They said little or nothing.

We then went on to Tibbie's, and drove back in the peace of the evening, the shadows falling from the west on the Yarrow hills. I had first met Shairp at Tibbie's, in Yarrow, much more than a quarter of a century before;—and this was the last time he and I were in Yarrow. I was not at all surprised when, shortly after this, he called me aside one day and said, "I wish to read to you a poem—you will know what it means," and he read the following stanzas:—

THREE FRIENDS IN YARROW.

Addressed to E. L. Lushington, September 1878.

1.

"O many a year is gone, since in life's fresh dawn,
The bonny forest over,
Morn to eve I wandered wide, as blithe as ever bride
To meet her faithful lover.

2.

From Newark's birchen bower to Dryhope's hoary Tower,
Peel and Keep I traced and numbered ;
And sought o'er muir and brae, by cairn and cromlech grey,
The graves where old warriors slumbered.

3.

Where e'er on Hope or Dale has lingered some faint trail
Of song or minstrel glory,
There I drank deep draughts at will, but could never drink my fill
Of the ancient Border story.

4.

O fond and foolish time when to ballad and old rhyme
Every throb of my pulse was beating !
As if old-world things like these could minister heart-ease,
Or the soul's deep want be meeting !

5.

Now when gone is summer prime, and the mellow autumn time
Of the year and of life has found us,
With Thee, O gentle Friend, how sweet one hour to spend,
With the beauty of Yarrow all around us.

6.

With him, too, for a guide, the Poet of Tweedside,
Our steps 'mong the braes to order,
Who still doth prolong the fervour, torrent-strong,
The old spirit of the Border.

7.

Heaven's calm autumnal grey on holm and hillside lay,
With here and there a gleaming ;
As the glints of sunny sheen, down Herman's[1] slopes of green,
O'er St Mary's Lake came dreaming.

---

[1] Herman Law, a hill on the watershed between Yarrow and Moffat Waters.

8.

There on Dryhope's Tower forlorn we marked the rowan, born
From the rents of roofless ruin;
And heard the [bridal] tale of the Flower of Yarrow Vale,
And her old romantic wooing.

9.

And then we wandered higher, where once St Mary's quire,
O'er the still lake watch was keeping:
But nothing now is seen save the lonely hillocks green,
Where the shepherds of Yarrow are sleeping.

10.

And we stood by the stone where Piers Cokburne rests alone
With his bride in their dwelling narrow;
And thou heard'st their tale of dool, and the wail of sorrow full,
The saddest ever wailed on Yarrow.

11.

Thou didst listen while thine eye all lovingly did lie
On the green braes spread around thee;
But I knew by the deep rapt quiet thou didst keep,
That the power of Yarrow had bound thee.

12.

O well that Yarrow should put on her sweetest mood,
To meet thy gentle being,
For of both the native mien, and the fortunes ye have seen,
Respond with a strange agreeing.

13.

There was beauty here before sorrow swept the Forest o'er,
Its beauty more meek to render:—
Thou wert gentle from thy birth, and the toils and cares of earth
Have but made thee more wisely tender.

14.

High souls have come and gone, and on these braes have thrown
The light of their glorious fancies,
And left their words to dwell and mingle with the spell
Of a thousand old romances.

15.

And who more fit to find, than thou, in soul and mind
All akin to great bards departed,—
The high thoughts here they breathed, the boon they have bequeathed
To all the tender-hearted.

16.

And we who did partake, by still St Mary's Lake,
Those hours of renewed communion,
Shall feel when far apart the remembrance at our heart
Keeps alive our foregone soul-union.

17.

From this world of eye and ear soon we must disappear;
But our after-life may borrow,
From these scenes some tone and hue, when all things are made new
In a fairer land than Yarrow."[1]

There is one writer who, though he has not expressed himself in verse, has yet so clearly entered into the soul of the Border scenery, that his prose is instinct with the power of its peculiar poetry. The author of *Rab and his Friends*—as genuine a piece of Scottish life and character as is to be found in our literature, and full of the artlessness of art—has limned the scenery of the Border land with exquisite touch and felicity of phrase in his *Minchmuir* and *Enterkin*—pictures that bespeak alike power of eye and pathos of heart.

I cannot omit notice of a touching ballad by a lady born in Peeblesshire, and belonging to one of the older families of the district. Sarah Lawson, afterwards Mrs

[1] This poem and that on *Manor Water* were published for the first time in Principal Shairp's *Glen Desseray, and other Poems* (1888), edited by his friend, Mr F. T. Palgrave. The publishers—Messrs Macmillan & Co.—have kindly allowed me to reproduce them here.

Gordon of Campbelton, was the daughter of John Lawson, the last laird of Cairnmuir, an estate lying near the source of the Lyne Water, and on the wild and lonely muirs that slope down from the Eastern Cairn Hill, one of the highest of the Pentlands. The Lawsons held Cairnmuir from the time of Sir Richard Lawson, who took a prominent part in public affairs, and who was made "Justice-Clerk" about 1488. He was of the family of Lawson of Humbie, and acquired Cairnmuir in 1500. His direct descendant parted with this and other Peeblesshire estates in 1834-36. Miss Lawson married in 1833 Alexander Gordon of Campbelton, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. Mrs Gordon died in 1890. She was a woman evidently of tender sensibility and much accomplishment. The poem that follows shows true poetic feeling, though it has certain defects in rhythm. Now and again one comes across solitary tombstones of this kind in moorland graveyards on the Border; but very seldom has the quickening suggestion of them been more truly or finely expressed.

M'Clellan's Tomb.

"These lines were suggested to the author by the sight of a tombstone in the little solitary churchyard of Kirkcormack, which lies close by the river Dee, on the opposite side of the water to Argreenan House. This churchyard, like many others in Galloway, is still occasionally used as a place of interment by a few families amongst the farmers and peasantry; although no trace is left of the place of worship to which it was once attached, save a grassy mound which apparently marks the site of the foundation. The tomb in question is in the interior of this mound; a flat stone engraven in characters nearly illegible with the name of 'The Honourable Patrick M'Clellan, aged 18.'

Some armorial bearings can still be traced upon the stone, and likewise the date, 1535. The occupant of the tomb was probably one of the M'Lellans of Auchlane." [1]

"Young sleeper by the waters!
How many a year hath fled
Since thy house's mournful daughters
Here wept their early dead!

Since thy stately kinsmen slowly
Laid the funeral stone o'er thee,
Within the chapel holy
Close by the rushing Dee!

That funeral stone's cold barrier
When it hid thy faded bloom;—
Did e'en the stalwart warrior
Drop a tear on thy tomb?

Did thy mother, anguish-laden,
There vent her soul's despair?
Did perchance some sorrowing maiden
Pour her heart's warm tear-drops there?

When the weary pilgrim roaming
Through fair Galloway,
To the river chapel coming,
There knelt him down to pray,—

Did thy sculptured name remind him
Of mortal life's brief span—
Till he cast earth's cares behind him
And went forth a holier man?

Yea! doubtless many wept thee
In thy cold winding-sheet;
And many a fond heart kept thee
Unforgotten while it beat.

---

[1] *Historical and Traditional Tales connected with the South of Scotland.* Kirkcudbright, 1843.

And many a Mass rose piously
For thy repose to pray,
But time hath dealt with these as thee,
And all are passed away.

Nor love, nor prayer, young sleeper!
Thy memory hath kept:
In death's cold realm the weeper
Hath lain down by the wept.

Could thy long rest be broken,
Of thy lofty race thou'dst see
Scarce one surviving token,
Save the stone that covers thee.

Thy proud forefather's dwelling
The land knows no more;
No trace remaineth telling
Where they held their state of yore;

Here where they wont to bend them
And breathe the holy vow,
The chapel-walls would lend them
But little shelter now.

The chapel-walls lie level
With the earth o'er thy breast;
On their base the wild flowers revel
And the lark makes her nest;

But the river where it floweth,
And the hills that skirt the shore,
And the breeze that o'er them bloweth,
They are ever as of yore.

Man's work no more retaineth
A place above the sod;
But thy last long home remaineth
'Mid the changeless works of God.

Each trace of all that knew it
For ages hath been flown;
But heaven's sweet showers still dew it,
And sunbeams kiss the stone.

Nor boots it now, young sleeper!
If thou wend'st at night or morn,
If green or ripe the reaper
Laid low the stately corn;—

Alike to thee thy waking
When the trump shall summon thee,
Thy sleep of ages breaking—
Beside the rushing Dee."

We have seen that the principal of the older songs of the Borders are due to gentlewomen of the ancient families of the district. We have Miss Elliot, Mrs Cockburn, Lady Grisell Baillie. To these we have to add in our own time the name of a lady whose original songs, considerable in number, are known only in a limited circle,—unfortunately for those interested in poetry infused with the spirit of the past. They are, besides, set by herself to music charmingly befitting. I refer to Lady John Scott of Spottiswood. I am happy to be permitted to print for the first time two of her poems, both having a peculiarly characteristic Border interest, and instinct with the feeling and genius of Border song.[1] Whether or not one sets store by heredity, it is worth noting that Lady John Scott is the representative of a family which held the ancestral lands as early at least as the time of Edward I., and has thus known and lived through all the changes and moods of Scottish and Border story. Besides, this family has been quite remarkable for the large proportion of its representatives

[1] These poems were first brought to my notice by Lord Napier and Ettrick, and it is through his kind offices that I am now privileged to publish them.

and members who have taken part in national action and added to the intellectual wealth of the country. William, sixth of the line, fell at Flodden. John was for long the minister of Calder, and the able administrator of the Reformed Church. His eldest son, John, born 1565, was the Archbishop of St Andrews and Lord Chancellor of Scotland, the well-known Church historian. Sir Robert, his second son, a distinguished lawyer, author of *The Practicks of the Laws of Scotland*, became Lord President of the College of Justice and Secretary for Scotland. He suffered for his loyalty and anti-Covenanting principles at St Andrews in 1646. Then we have Governor Spotswood of Virginia; then John Spotswood, another famous lawyer, who "reduced Scots law to a science." He bought back the family estate after an alienation of eighty years. The representative of this ancient and honourable line, in whom the spirit of the old Border song has found expression, is now Alicia Anne, who married Lord John Scott, second surviving son of the fourth Duke of Buccleuch. He died in 1860.

The two songs, rather ballads, which follow have a true naturalness and simplicity, and a wonderful, almost weird, touch of pathos. Only one who has lived on the Borders, known familiarly the scenery, felt too its power as a soul impression, sympathised with the heart attachment which the men and women of the district have for the places—the hills, glens, streams of the land—could have written those stanzas. They produce the effect of poetry, as the oldest ballads do, by the very simplest means.

The Bounds o' Cheviot.

1.

"Shall I never see the bonnie banks o' Kale again,
Nor the dark craigs o' Hownam Law,
Nor the green dens o' Chatto, nor Twaeford's mossy stane,
Nor the birks upon Philogar Shaw?
Nae mair, nae mair, I shall never see the bounds o' Cheviot mair!

2.

Shall I never watch the breakin' o' the simmer day
Ower the shouther o' the Deer Buss height,
When the Stainchel, and the Mote, and the flowery Buchtrigg brae
Redden slowly wi' the mornin' light?
Nae mair, nae mair, I shall never see the bounds o' Cheviot mair!

3.

Shall I never wander lanely when the gloamin' fa's,
And the wild birds flutter to their rest,
Ower the lang heathery muir, to the bonnie Brunden Laws
Standin' dark against the glitter o' the west?
Nae mair, nae mair, I shall never see the bounds o' Cheviot mair!

4.

Shall I never ride the mossy braes o' Heatherhope mair,
Shall I never see the Fairlone burn,
Nor the wild heights o' Hindhope, wi' its corries green and fair,
And the waters trinklin' doon amang the fern?
Nae mair, nae mair, I shall never see the bounds o' Cheviot mair!

5.

Shall I never win the marches at Coquet Head
Through the mists and the driftin' snaw,
Nor the dark moors o' Cottenshope, nor the quiet springs o' Rede,
Glintin' bright across the Border far awa?
Nae mair, nae mair, I shall never see the bounds o' Cheviot mair!"

The other by the same writer is entitled—

THE LAMMERMOOR LILT.

Lady John Scott writes: "I used to hear an old Lammermoor woman repeat the first four lines of these words. The rest of the words and the tune are by me."[1]

"Happy's the craw that builds
Its nest on Trotten Shaw,
An' drinks o' the waters o' Dye,
For nae mair may I.

Blythe may the muircock craw
On the heights abune Scaurlaw;
'Mang the heather-blooms he'll flee,
But there never mair will I be.

It's weel for the plovers that bigg
On the bonnie leas o' Whinrigg,
An' whistle on the Rawburn Stane,
But I'll never be there again.

Blest are the trouts whase doom
Is i' the water o' Watch to soom,
An' in the Twinlaw ford to play,
But far frae it I maun gae.

The hare may rin merry enouch
On the braes o' Horseupcleuch,
Where the broom grows lang an' fair,
But I'll never see it mair.

The tod may be happier still
On the back o' the Twinlaw hill,
'Mang the bonnie moss-hags to hide,
But there I maunna bide."

[1] Letter to Lord Napier and Ettrick.

It would not be easy to estimate or express the degree of refined and elevated feeling in many minds, of which the Ballads and Songs now passed in review have been the source. Some men have felt their power so strongly that we cannot look for an increase in the intensity of the gratification, or a greater quickening of the poetic faculty than they have already caused. But we may hope that the purifying and refining power of Border song may be greatly extended, especially among those born in the district, to whom it comes as a natural heritage. The degree in which a Borderer appreciates the poetry of his native hills and vales may be taken as the measure of his culture. The Borderer who is entirely impervious to its influence, if there be any such, may fairly be given up as incapable of education in any true sense of that word.

As a distinctive form of poetry, Border song has a permanent place in our national literature. It is simple, outward, direct, not without art, especially in its later forms, yet powerful mainly because it is true to feelings of the human heart, which are as universal and permanent as they are pure; and because it is fresh as the sights and sounds of the varied land of hill and dale, of purple moorland and clear sparkling streams, which it loves so well. It is a form of poetry with which we can at no time dispense, if we are to keep our literature healthy; and it is especially needed in these times. For we have abounding morbid introspection and self-analysis; we have greatly too much of the close hot atmosphere of our own fancies and feelings. We depend for our interest in literature too much on the trick of

incident or story, too little on character which embodies primary human emotion. We need, as people did at the commencement of the century, some reminder of the grandeur of a simple life, of the instinctive character of high motives and noble deeds, of the self-satisfying sense of duty done; and the close workshops of our literary manufactures would be all the better for a good fresh breeze from the hills and the holms of the Teviot and the Yarrow.

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